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FIRE IN THE GULF

Chances for Peace

ALEXANDER COCKBURN · DANIEL ELLSBERG · GEORGE McGOVERN · PAUL SAVOY

Poland: A Debate

NOV 19

DANIEL SINGER · LAWRENCE GOODWYN

EDITORIAL

PROGRESSIVE MESSAGE

"All cases are unique, and very similar to others," wrote T.S. Eliot, apparently with America's midterm elections in mind. Efforts to impose a meaningful pattern on the thousands of contests must be largely in vain. There was no tidal wave of anti-incumbency fervor, as many had predicted, but neither was there much enthusiasm for any seated candidate. A few representatives connected to the savings and loan scandal were submerged, but others survived. Some anti-tax crusaders won; some unexpectedly lost or came close to losing. Democrats generally outshone Republicans, but not conspicuously so, as day to night.

REAGAN, LIES AND HISTORY
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

INDIAN COUNSEL
DAVID SEALS

BEWITCHING 50s
MELISSA PRITCHARD

A 50s ROMANCE
LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

HIGH & LOW AT MoMA
ARTHUR C. DANTO

Some cases were tantalizingly similar to others, and it is in those that the truly interesting lessons of a dull electoral season may be drawn. Bernie Sanders's substantial victory for Vermont's lone Congressional seat and Paul Wellstone's squeaker win for Minnesota's junior seat in the Senate prove that real radicals and authentic progressives can succeed in high-level electoral politics. Wellstone, his state's co-chair of the Jesse Jackson campaign in 1988, took its policy positions practically in toto, from a national health program to income redistribution to Pentagon budget slashing, and, with the help of a network of grass-roots organizers and activists, he beat the rich and entrenched conservative Republican, Rudy Boschwitz.

Sanders's achievement emerged from more than a decade of community organizing, base building and coalition creation. The

(*Cont. on p. 631*)

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EXCHANGE.

'U.N. FIG LEAF'

Ithaca, N.Y.

Alexander Cockburn calls for "the conversion of the forces confronting Iraq in the region into a genuinely multilateral force—with diminished U.S. presence—under a genuine U.N. command" ["Beat the Devil," Oct. 8]. This is basically the position of cost-conscious Secretary of State James Baker as he flies around the globe asking for Soviet minesweepers, Syrian airplanes and Japanese jeeps.

Kuwait was not a nation but a British oil well. Before July 1961 Britain ran "Kuwait's" foreign policy as a British company/state. Britain got scared when Iraq nationalized the British-owned Iraqi Oil Company, and Kuwait was granted nominal independence. Eighteen families controlled 90 percent of ex-Kuwait's considerable (now frozen) foreign assets from oil sales, which they kindly recycled back into the banks and stock exchanges of the capitalist countries that bought Kuwaiti oil. Legal niceties aside, this arrangement is old-fashioned colonial plunder.

So here Cockburn's respect for the "legitimacy of national boundaries" means implicit support for British and French imperialist Balkanization of the Middle East. The main historical "acquisition of territory by force" in the Middle East is British, French and U.S. division of the region according to their interests in political submission, military outposts and cheap oil rather than any natural ethnic or economic features of the area.

There is no difference, as Cockburn fancies, between the U.N. sanctions and the U.S. preparations for war, exemplified by ex-Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Dugan's plans to carpet-bomb Baghdad. The U.N. sanctions are paper without the U.S. Army: If you support one you de facto support the other. You can't impose a starvation embargo on a country with the intention of forcing its rulers to their knees without backing it up with military force, possessed in usable offensive quantity only by the United States.

First Grenada, then Panama, now Iraq. If the United States is allowed to regain its 1950s status as the capitalist world's chief enforcer with another U.N. fig leaf, the result could be deadly to any hope of social progress in countries like Nicaragua, unable to withstand a U.S. assault. The United States is not blockading Iraq because former U.S. ally Saddam Hussein is a fascist strongman but because Iraq annoyed the United States, just as Nicaragua did. A U.S. victory could set a dangerous precedent in the post-cold war world. Defending Iraq from imminent U.S. attack is an elementary anti-imperialist gesture. This principle is much more likely to promote anti-U.S.-interventionism in the future than Cockburn and Senator Terry Sanford's call for a more long-term, geopolitically prudent policy for U.S. imperialism in the Middle East. *Jeffrey S. Vogel*

'GASOLINE ON THE FIRE'

New York City

Alexander Cockburn criticizes the slogan "U.S. Out of the Gulf" and those of us who support it because we do not condemn Iraq's annexation of Kuwait and Saddam Hussein. He recommends that we place our faith in the United Nations and call for a truly multilateral force under a U.N. command. I disagree with him on each of those points.

The greatest danger facing all of us is a war in the gulf. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops are in place, and the United States is itching to fight. A yellow press is preparing the stage. Choosing not to criticize Iraq at this time is not the same as approving of its actions. Should we, as Cockburn does, throw gasoline on the fire? Making criticisms of Iraq part of the progressive community's agenda, I believe, is outweighed by the mischief and obfuscation that could cause.

Castigating Iraq for the annexation of Kuwait promotes the fiction that the violation of international law prohibiting aggression has something to do with the reason the United States has sent more than 200,000 soldiers into the gulf. The United States is there to control access to oil, build bases and dominate the region—as one senator said, to stop "an Arab aggressor seeking to control Arab oil." If we give legitimacy to the belief that the deployment is about aggression and international law, the real reasons for the buildup and potential war will be hidden from the American people. Our job is to reveal those reasons, not mouth pieties.

Nor do I accept that we must condemn Iraq now so that we will have a precedent for condemning the United States the next time it invades a Grenada or a Panama. Will precedent have any efficacy here? Our claims of international-law violations are always without teeth; the United States is still in Panama. Are we to help it out here by joining the chorus? Does anyone believe that the next U.S. imperialist adventure will be met with a U.N. blockade and 240,000 troops?

Cockburn's reliance on the U.N. is entirely misplaced. The United States is using the U.N. as a cloak for imperial aggression. As Senator Ernest Hollings has pointed out, "The Administration has used these Security Council resolutions as sugar coating for what remains in essence a unilateral U.S. response." The Security Council Cockburn is so anxious to support has voted to use force to ban the importation of food and medicine to Iraq. Civilians, including many children, are dying.

At bottom, this deployment and likely war are about domination of the Third World's resources by the industrialized world. And this is a U.N. in which no one who now speaks for the poor or the South has a veto. We must not lock ourselves into demanding Iraq's withdrawal, a position that, if taken to its logical conclusion, will have us justifying a horrendous war. There is nothing wrong, and everything right, with this demand: "U.S. Out of the Gulf!" *Michael Ratner*

'MULTINATIONAL APPROACH'

Guilford, Vt.

Alexander Cockburn is right, the left ought to support the multilateral force in the Persian Gulf regardless of George Bush's motives. Without the military response to Saddam's invasion, there would have already been a disastrous war. As I write, there is hope of averting one and a possibility for unprecedented international cooperation.

By seeking multinational support, Bush was forced to accept international constraints on U.S. policy that he probably did not anticipate. And now he's stuck with them. If Bush opts for unilateral military action, he destroys worldwide hope for a peaceful, U.N.-backed, postwar order, and the United States will be isolated and Bush denounced everywhere. If he accepts the international constraints, he strengthens the international order and creates a precedent for international cooperation against some future U.S. military adventure. That may not be enough to stop a U.S. invasion of, say, Honduras or Guatemala, but with the current multinational force as precedent, the United States might find the stakes higher than when it invaded Panama and Grenada.

The peace movement, like military experts, is always refighting the last war. U.S. use of the U.N. as a front for the Korean War is not analogous. In 1950 America was the only economic and military world power. In 1990 we have to be careful which countries we ignore or offend. Instead of *protesting* Bush's action (which only marginalizes us in the political arena) we should be *encouraging* the multinational approach.

There are related issues on which Bush is vulnerable. Other countries should share the military cost and burden. A windfall tax on oil profits should finance an alternative energy program. We should bash the Reagan-Bush administrations as well as the Democratic Congress for destroying Carter's energy program and bash them again for supporting dictators like Saddam. The multinational response to Iraq destroys the Middle East status quo and in the long run could provide opportunities for a Palestinian settlement, if the United States, joining the consensus, gets tough with Israel. *Marty Jezer*

'HATCHING UP PLOTS'

Chamblee, Ga.

Alexander Cockburn claims that by confining itself to a call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the gulf, the left implicitly endorses Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But all the left is implying by its silence on that question

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EDITORIALS.

Message

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

independent alliance that mobilized Sanders's election also sent several new representatives to the state legislature, controls the mayoralty and has a plurality on the board of aldermen in Burlington. It is now poised to progress to a full-fledged new party to take on the Tweedle duo.

Sanders will be part of a small but energetic battalion of progressive freshmen in Congress, including Tom Andrews from Maine, Rosa DeLauro from Connecticut and Maxine Waters from California. Their victories on November 6 suggest that the lack of a left in politics now is as much a supply-side problem as anything else. There is a demand for populist, progressive politics, which can be fulfilled if candidates will take the effort and the risks to run on a strong platform.

The election results demonstrated several times over that the neoliberal model for Democrats, much beloved by the party's heavies and their news media cronies, is a bankrupt paradigm. Dianne Feinstein and John Silber, the favorites of the Democratic Leadership Council crowd, went down in flames. Bill Bradley almost bought the farm in New Jersey.

At the same time, candidates such as Ann Richards in Texas who campaigned as progressives to a multicultural constituency on the basis of class and economics did amazingly well. But Harvey Gantt, who ran a basically middle-

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class liberal campaign (his issues were education and the environment) and had no specific message for working-class whites, lost to Jesse Helms in North Carolina. Gantt's backing from the head of the North Carolina National Bank had the effect of inhibiting his use of the S&L scandal and distancing him from labor issues.

An economically conservative black candidate, such as Douglas Wilder, can win in the South on middle-class issues (like abortion), but a candidate of any color who occupies the progressive position has to cross the racial divide and go for a big chunk of the working-class white vote on the basis of gut economic issues. In suburban Atlanta David Worley almost licked the mighty Newt Gingrich partly because of Gingrich's opposition to the Eastern Airlines strikers and his support for the Congressional pay raise.

There were some bad blows on this Election Day—the worst was the defeat of Jim Hightower for re-election as Texas Agriculture Commissioner—and some promising victories. Politics has not been reordered. But there are signs that new movements are building, that authentic opposition to Reagan-Bushism can be a ticket to office, and that the long-awaited awakening of populism at the polls may not be as far away as most of us feared.

Present Danger

As Congress adjourned last month, eighty-two House Democrats joined in a statement, drafted by Representative Ronald Dellums, expressing "grave concern" that war might be imminent, with catastrophic consequences and massive loss of life, including 10,000 to 50,000 Americans killed. The signers stated: "We are emphatically opposed to any offensive military action." The representatives were "gravely concerned that the Administration may attempt an end-run around the Constitution" by launching a war while Congress is out of session. They demanded that the Administration "not undertake any offensive military action without the full deliberation and declaration [of war, by Congress] required by the Constitution."

Now that the election is over, with Congress out of session and the buildup in the gulf approaching completion, the period of greatest danger is just beginning. What should those, both in and out of Congress, who share these feelings of intense concern do now to reduce the risk of war by an Administration "end-run around the Constitution"? It is time to ask all who understand the present moral and physical risks to "cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence," in Thoreau's words.

For those honorable representatives who have spoken out, and for their counterparts in the Senate, this is not the time to follow routine schedules, which for most would mean a rest period after an exhausting session and intense campaign. Urgently educating and rallying the public through town meetings, talk shows, Op-Ed columns and demonstrations—helping to organize a public movement—is surely one obligation. Above all, there is no time to lose in calling Congressional hearings on the most important issue that Congress ever has to face: whether or not to go to war. Those members who already recognize that war would be catastrophic should use all their influence to bring about *immediate* hearings that can raise the rest of Congress, along with the public and the Administration itself, to that awareness.

The full Congress need not be in session for the chair of committees and subcommittees dealing with foreign affairs, armed services, intelligence and appropriations to hold hearings to investigate the following questions, among others:

§ What are the best estimates of the civilian casualties that would result from comprehensive U.S. airstrikes against Iraq and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait?

§ What are the best estimates of U.S., allied and Iraqi casualties in an air/ground/amphibious offensive to retake Kuwait, under varying assumptions? (What is the range of uncertainty? The worst case? What are the premises and the methodology of the calculations?)

§ Under what conditions might the ground war be extended throughout Iraq, and what then would be the estimated U.S. and civilian casualties?

§ What is the range of casualties that could be inflicted by Iraqi retaliatory attacks, including chemical warfare, on Israel, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia? What is the likelihood and scale of suicidal terrorist attacks on the West?

In short, to use the Pentagon's term, what is the expected "butcher's bill" for an American-initiated offensive? How much blood will there be in the gasoline?

Other questions would include, What would be the effect of highly probable Israeli intervention, alongside the United States, on our current alliances and on prospects for collaborative peacekeeping in the region? What is the likelihood of popular uprisings against Arab or Muslim regimes now aligned with the United States, involving us in widespread counterinsurgency campaigns? And what would be the effects on the world economy of possible Iraqi retaliation against regional oil production?

The more Congress and the public come to know the range of uncertainty that President Bush is confronting, especially the more ominous possibilities, the harder it will be for the President to ignore those risks, to shut his eyes and "roll the iron dice." Moreover, as Morton Halperin of the American Civil Liberties Union has suggested, such Congressional hearings, meeting continuously in sequence during the recess, could monitor Administration intentions—by compelling testimony in closed sessions if necessary—and thus provide early warning of a need to convene the full Congress in emergency session. It could then pass legislation restraining the President from imminent offensive action.

As Eduard Shevardnadze said at the U.N., speaking of nuclear proliferation, "It is time to trigger off the emergency systems in order to save the situation." The emergency system our Constitution provides to save us from a bloody, unnecessary U.S.-initiated war is Congress. DANIEL ELLSBERG

Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense and State Department official, revealed the Pentagon Papers to the Senate and the press during the Vietnam War.

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Negotiations Now

Saddam Hussein may have inadvertently thrown a challenge that could lead to a comprehensive Middle East peace agreement. The present crisis has elevated the entire Middle East to a new level of U.S. and international awareness. Saddam has unwittingly united the United Nations, greatly enhancing its promise as a global peacekeeping force. He has also brought the United States and the U.S.S.R. into closer cooperation.

It can be argued that to deter a possible Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia, President Bush was justified in deploying troops there. But that mission should now be turned over to the United Nations. U.S. ground troops should be systematically replaced by troops from other U.N. countries, especially from the Arab world. U.S. military participation should be limited to air and naval power coordinated with the U.N. troop command. The focus of activity must shift from a dangerous and costly military buildup to a determined diplomatic and economic effort to get Iraq out of Kuwait and to restore some measure of stability to the gulf.

The Administration's dogmatic pronouncements must give way to more positive language. Given the massive buildup of troops, tanks, ships, aircraft and poison gas; the proliferation of hostages and refugees; the increasing number of nations in poverty and debt, aggravated by higher oil prices; and the rising Islamic fundamentalism and anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment, the time has come for a fresh approach to the entire Middle East situation.

At the end of the Napoleonic wars, all the interested nations met at Vienna in 1814 and 1815 to deal with a vast array of political, economic, geographic and military disputes. Out of that Congress of Vienna emerged a new structure for peace and stability in Europe that lasted for a century, until it was shattered by World War I. Some of those arrangements ignored pressing social and political injustices, but the conference provided a practical forum for dealing with a host of immediate problems.

Why not hold a similar conference now, this time convened in New York by the U.N. Security Council and guided by concern for self-determination and justice? Perhaps such an international meeting could be conducted in three stages, as the Soviet Union has suggested. Stage I would focus on an end to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. If Saddam agrees not only to withdraw his forces but to forgo the further development of chemical and nuclear weapons, Iraq might be granted an opening to the Persian Gulf and sole control over Rumailah, an important oilfield located largely in Iraq and extending partly into Kuwait.

Stage II could focus on the long-festering Palestinian issue and the relationship of Israel to the Arab nations. If these issues can be negotiated, a U.N. peacekeeping force could safeguard the settlement. With adequate security guarantees, Israel might be willing to relinquish the occupied territories, including the Golan Heights. Syria would be asked to yield its claim on Lebanon and fully accept the right of Israel to live within secure borders as an independent state. Stage III might focus on Lebanon and the desperate need for a stable and effective Lebanese government guaranteed by the U.N.

The urgency of addressing the various Middle East issues in a comprehensive conference is underscored by the huge new arms explosion threatening the region. The Pentagon, in response to the Iraqi threat, has proposed a transfer of planes, tanks and artillery to Saudi Arabia over the next few years that may cost more than $20 billion. President Bush has recommended canceling Egypt's $7.5 billion debt to the United States for earlier arms and other aid. These moves have frightened the Israelis, who are now asking for debt cancellation and military aid as a counter to the Arab arms buildup and the continuing danger from Baghdad.

In short, the United States is fostering a costly, much expanded Arab-Israeli arms competition supposedly aimed at Iraq but actually fed by the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict. This problem cries out for solution within the context of an overall peace and security arrangement.

The main reason the United States should welcome a peaceful outcome in the Middle East is that our economic and social problems at home are, in the longer term, vastly more important to our security and well-being than anything facing us in the Middle East. The faster we can move from the Persian Gulf diversion to putting our own house in order, the better it will be both for us and for others who desire a more constructive American role abroad. GEORGE MCGOVERN

George McGovern was a Senator from South Dakota and the Democratic presidential candidate in 1972.

★

SWEET RELIEF

The old escutcheon had an ugly blotch:
I'd never owned or worn a Rolex watch.
My timepiece, far from being that deluxe,
Was usually something worth, say, thirty bucks.
So I suppose some folks who met me found
My status only inches from the ground.

But now, we're told, a wave of thieves exist
Who'll ask you for the Rolex on your wrist.
And if you try to fight or run or yell,
They might decide to take the wrist as well.
Thank God I'm safe from robbers that depraved.
And think of all the money that I've saved.
Yes, in a world so scary, bleak and strange,
It's nice to have some good news for a change.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

> Like a lot of people of my generation, I'd come out of the Depression and a war expecting a better and more equitable world. I really thought we had fought a war to end all wars.
>
> But I didn't like some of the things I saw after VJ Day. If you wanted to buy a new car, a salesman told you it was available only if you paid a sizable fee under the table. This didn't sit well with those of us who had been in uniform for four or five years.
>
> . . .
>
> At Fort Roach, I became one of the first Americans to discover the full truth about the horrors of Nazism.
>
> . . .
>
> The Iranian initiative seemed to be working—and we were *not* trading arms for hostages.
>
> . . .
>
> I knew Oliver North only slightly when he worked for the National Security Council.

These pathetic, self-aggrandizing and self-pitying lies, taken at random from *An American Life: The Autobiography*, are no disgrace to the ex-President who "uttered" them. It cannot be helped, with Ronald Wilson Reagan, that every word he says is a lie, including the words "and" and "but." The truly disgraceful paragraph in the book comes not in the main text but in the acknowledgments:

> Robert Lindsey, a talented writer, was with me every step of the way. . . . The wonderful and thoroughly professional team at Simon and Schuster, under the able leadership of CEO Dick Snyder, were there day and night. . . . Editor in chief Michael Korda patiently read every single word time and time again, dotted every *i* and crossed every *t*—no one could ask for a better editor. Charlie Hayward, Alice Mayhew, and Jack McKeown were also of invaluable assistance. And Mort Janklow, my literary agent. . . .

Yeah, yeah. My question is this: Why are none of the above bringing suit against Reagan for defamation? The book he has "written" is a digest and concoction of easily detectable and contemptible falsehoods. Do the above-named really choose to be implicated?

Lindsey is a former *New York Times* reporter who lucked out by writing *The Falcon and the Snowman*. Snyder, Korda, Mayhew and the rest are people of consequence in the publishing industry. None of them, as far as I know, have any difficulty paying the rent or taking a vacation. How can they make themselves accomplices to a fraud?

I'm serious. Ronald Reagan could no more have written a book on his own, even this book, than he could fly to Uranus. It is not as if a living ex-President sent in a manuscript to a publisher and the publisher thought, Well, politics and objectivity don't come into it: Whatever the man says is of historical interest. This appalling volume is, by any real definition, *authored* by the journalists, publishers, editors and agents cited earlier. They are thus responsible in an unusually direct way for passages like the following:

> Those first months after the Iran-contra affair hit the front pages were frustrating for me. *For the first time in my life, people didn't believe me.* I had told the truth, but they still didn't believe me. [Emphasis added.]

How much would you want before you agreed to become co-author of such a trio of sentences? Go on, think of a figure. Then double it. While you are discovering your price, ask how proud you would be to have penned this little passage about Geneva:

> The lake was shrouded in mist that gave its rippled surface the look of burnished pewter. Above, the sky was a dull curtain of dark clouds.
>
> It was a dreary, yet strikingly beautiful panorama.

Think you could have done better? What about "Moscow's attempted takeover of Hollywood" on page 114, an event as demonstrably fictional as Reagan's donning of a wartime uniform? Would you care to have it said of yourself that you had crossed that *t*, dotted that *i* and passed it off as history?

Also, passed it on as history. In later years, students and teachers will perhaps come across this book and, the national memory being what it is, will take it as the record of a presidency. It won't especially matter if they read a paragraph beginning, "First ladies, I discovered, are one of the taxpayers' biggest bargains," because that can be left between Mr. Lindsey and his stylistic conscience, or whatever may be left of it. However, a statement like, "I felt that we should proceed with the initiative on a step-by-step basis—cautiously and in compliance with the law," when made about the arms-for-hostages deal, is untrue on its face and is, furthermore, not written by the man who deceitfully signs it. What is this but lying to the young, to history and for the record?

Simon and Schuster do not choose to say what they paid for the "book," which is a steal at $24.95. But it is not conceivable that they would pay any other author for a carpentered, fabricated book and simply thrust it past the process of editing and fact checking. To the other offenses, then, add the reflection that this shoddy and cynical enterprise was undertaken for the sake of money and publicity.

A few years ago, I mentioned Reagan's lying claim to have helped liberate the Nazi death camps—a claim he had made in person to Yitzhak Shamir and later to Simon Wiesenthal [see "Minority Report," September 20, 1986]. That abysmal deception is not perpetuated in these pages. But a portion of the story is preserved. Reagan said, on the earlier occasions, that he had kept a film of the camps in case it was later denied that the Holocaust ever occurred. Here he merely says:

> Some years later, a producer and his wife came over for dinner and we started talking about the war and he said, "I really wonder if all that stuff we're hearing about the Germans is true. I don't know if I believe it or not."
>
> "Well, I have a little movie I'd like to show you," I said. I set up my 16-millimeter projector, put up the screen, and let the story tell itself.

I think this story is an insult and a lie, and that unless Reagan, Korda, Lindsey, Mayhew and the rest of its authors can supply any proof they should make a public apology and give all the money to a charity other than themselves.

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ARTICLES.

WALESA VS. MAZOWIECKI

Poland Chooses—What's at Stake

DANIEL SINGER AND
LAWRENCE GOODWYN

On November 25 Poland will try, for the first time in its history, to elect a president through universal suffrage. Although there are six candidates, the main battle is a fratricidal duel between two leaders of Solidarity: 47-year-old Lech Walesa and 63-year-old Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland's Prime Minister for more than a year. Much more is at stake, however, than two contrasting personalities. To help us understand the issues behind the vote, we turned to Daniel Singer, The Nation's *Europe correspondent and author of* The Road to Gdansk, *and Lawrence Goodwyn, a professor of history at Duke University and author of two standard works on U.S. agrarian populism and of the forthcoming* Breaking the Barriers: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland. *—The Editors*

There seems to be a large measure of agreement between Walesa and Mazowiecki over fundamental economic policy. That being the case, can you say what you think the contest on November 25 is really about? Is it useful, for example, to use words such as "liberal" versus "populist" to characterize the two sides?

DANIEL SINGER: Rumor has it that Walesa, if elected president, would appoint as prime minister Leszek Balcerowicz, his rival's Finance Minister and author of his austerity program. This confirms your crucial point: that the two protagonists agree on the essential thing, namely, the quick road to capitalism. But if you need to attack, you may invent differences. Walesa began by accusing the Mazowiecki government of acting too slowly, yet who wants to move faster in the direction of lower living standards and higher unemployment? With his knack for feeling the mood of the people, he corrected the line: too slow in getting rid of the *nomenklatura*. This was and is popular because, despite the change of regime, Poles see that the same people remain in charge of their factories and offices. It is popular but purely cant—since, having forgotten the pledges of self-management and workers' control, Walesa the privatizer has no intention of giving working people any mastery over their labor.

Agreeing on economic policy, can't they have fundamental differences on social and political issues? Here the answer is more complex. The two camps have a different attraction: Walesa and his associates appeal to the nationalist, the ethnic, to "true Catholic Poles"; Mazowiecki and his colleagues refer to the principles of Western bourgeois democracy, with their basis in the rule of law. It is no accident that the leaders of the reborn *endecja*, the prewar jingoist and anti-Semitic party, should now be favoring Walesa. It would be wrong, however, to present the battle as one between left and right. The so-called lay left that Mazowiecki is supposed to represent is a figment of his opponents' imagination. Neither side, as we have seen, is progressive in economic matters (they can at best be described as "radicals" in Thatcherite terms). And the followers of Mazowiecki do not have the courage to be lay. The men who braved the prisons of the former regime do not dare to defy the Catholic Church, the ideological master of the day. Suffice it to say that religious instruction has been reintroduced into schools by the Mazowiecki government. In short, you have a phony battle and potentially a real conflict.

LAWRENCE GOODWYN: It is not useful to use words like "liberal" and "populist." As political description, they effectively conceal the social reality they are presumed to be describing. As generally employed, "populism" is a term of condescension applied indiscriminately to passing political figures rather than to self-organized constituencies. Solidarnosc emerged in Poland as a self-generated social formation, and all of its local and national representatives and advisers, including Walesa, have necessarily endured a relationship to the popular base that has ranged in tension from manageable to shaky.

Greater clarity may be achieved if the question is refocused on constituencies rather than on two passing spokespersons. But to do so brings to the forefront prior attitudes in the mind of the observer. Here we encounter the aforementioned widespread tendency of intellectual elites to condescend to non-elite groups, a cultural blinder that has made Polish politics since 1980 difficult for Western intellectuals to comprehend.

As a practicing historian, I must say I have found this cultural habit, widespread as it is, to have had a crippling impact on both historical research and political discourse. As a populist specialist, the historian Norman Pollack once tellingly summarized this conventional and sanctioned approach: "The critics of Populism exhibit the very traits of authoritarianism they impute to others. Not willing to admit the existence of authoritarian currents in ourselves and in our society, we project them onto others—the outgroup, the Populists, indeed the reform tradition in America. Thus Populism becomes for the historian and the larger society what the Jew is for the anti-Semite. Both historian and anti-Semite require a scapegoat, and the character of that scapegoat is incidental."

The interplay between two distinct groups—the intellectuals and the organized working class—has shaped the course of the Polish movement over the past ten years (if we start with the Gdansk strike of August 1980) or fourteen years (if we go back to the foundation in 1976 of KOR, the Workers' Defense Committee). Their rivalry surfaced with great clarity in 1989 with the formation of a round table whose popular side was composed predominantly of intel-

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lectuals. Does this in some way account for the splits that have developed in the past year?

DS: Historians will use the recent Polish example to show that the intelligentsia can play all sorts of roles. When a handful of intellectuals founded KOR, they suggested that the intelligentsia could play a historic role if it was linked with a genuine social movement. This was fully confirmed in the glorious summer of 1980, when the striking workers of Gdansk expressed the superior interests of society and the Warsaw intellectuals acted as their advisers (already then, Walesa was the head of the strikers and Mazowiecki of the "experts"). When Solidarity, the union born of this joint victory, talked the following year of self-management from the shop floor to the top, this was, in my view, the last possible chance for a peaceful transition in Eastern Europe that did not necessarily lead in a capitalist direction.

Rather than seek a difficult deal with the labor movement, the Polish Communist Party decided to smash it. The military coup of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski drove Solidarity underground and at that point the center of gravity moved gradually away from the factories. Thus, when it came to talks and then elections, in 1989, this time the intellectuals claimed to be expressing the superior interests of society and used the workers as electoral fodder. And this shift had a radical impact on policy: Self-management was at once abandoned for the sake of the capitalist gospel in its monetarist version.

All this has an influence on but cannot explain the split between Walesa and Mazowiecki. The conversion to capitalism involves the whole leadership of Solidarity and cannot, therefore, be attributed to the social origins of its members. Within the main organization backing Mazowiecki, ROAD (the Polish acronym for Civic Movement–Democratic Action), you find such well-known labor leaders as Zbigniew Bujak and Wladyslaw Frasyniuk. Besides, the Mazowiecki government had no chance of applying its austerity program without at least the acquiescence of the labor movement. True, the workers were bewildered. The very idea of socialism had been discredited together with its "really existing" version. They were even ready for some sacrifice. But sacrifices without any compensation being offered in terms of decision-making power, either in the factory or in the nation at large? Had they only conquered the right to greater exploitation? They needed one of their own to tell them that there was no alternative, and who was better fitted for this task than Walesa? He thus has more responsibility than his rival for the distortion of class struggle in Poland.

LG: To the very few who looked, the "split" has been quite apparent all along—during the initial organizing crisis of August 1980, during the fifteen months of legal Solidarnosc, during the years of martial law, as well as in the new era of post-party politics. Intellectuals played no consequential role in the organizational construction of Solidarnosc or in the tense crisis of August except to offer ill-considered strategic advice, which the worker leaders wisely ignored. The widespread failure to recognize this reality has disfigured most of the interpretations of Polish politics that

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have appeared since the shipyard workers in Gdansk laid down their tools on August 14, 1980. The structure that emerged was centrally influenced by those who created it—broadly speaking by industrial workers but more specifically by social formations fashioned by workers in the maritime provinces of the Baltic coast. The sense of prerogative that this historical experience (1945-80) gave to Solidarnosc's legions goes far to explain the worker dominance of the 1980-81 period and Walesa's personal ascendancy as its spokesperson.

Attempts by Warsaw intellectuals generally and particularly of the most organized sector, KOR, to take over the movement began at the moment of working-class victory—literally in the first week following the original Gdansk agreement—and persisted through the aftermath of the Bydgoszcz crisis* in the spring of 1981. These efforts were renewed in the early years of martial law, its more overt forms ceasing only in 1985 with the acknowledgment by intellectuals that Walesa could most effectively be dealt with by being surrounded rather than dislodged.

Two elements bear here. The depth and subtlety of the internal struggle for influence over Solidarnosc have drawn almost no attention. This vacuum has had the effect of lending great credence to rather facile interpretations of Polish politics offered since 1980 by Polish intellectuals to visiting journalists and scholars.

It is probably prudent at this point to characterize these interpretations, the most eloquent of which have emanated from the pen of the writer-activist Adam Michnik. First, they reflect the views of one of the two contending factions—that is, the views presented by intellectuals, which are routinely partisan and self-serving. Second, they are class-based, experientially grounded and therefore quite natural. But they present a gross, even grotesque, exaggeration of the role of KOR (and secular and religious intellectuals generally) as causative agents in the creation of Solidarnosc.

The depth of contrast in the opposing views is obscured by two highly visible political conclusions both groups possessed at the outset or have come to share over a decade of political struggle. First, in the period 1980-88, the structural strain within Solidarnosc was largely concealed beneath the deep enmity toward the one-party state that the Polish intelligentsia and the working class shared.

The second area of affinity turns on a cultural development that is only now becoming clear to Western observers—namely, the extent to which the agonizing decades of Leninist rule have discredited socialism as an inclusive, discernible and dynamic political idea. This is not to say that a number of components associated with one or another socialisms have been historically desanctioned but rather that plain events have revealed the extent to which central features of the dream have always been left in a dreamlike state. I refer to the absence of coherent guides to short-term and long-term democratic conduct. The changes in Eastern Europe

*The public beating by security police of a number of Solidarnosc activists at Bydgoszcz threatened the legitimacy of the movement. The tortuous compromise that ensued shook the morale of both the party and Solidarnosc.

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are a step in the right direction, but contemporary criteria of democratic evaluation are so warped that we have resisted the meaning of these early evolutions, including the deep contradictions they embody.

This is a working class that a decade ago spoke of self-management and now speaks of an accelerated transition to a market economy. At the same time, its rank-and-file membership has declined sharply. What kind of union movement, and more especially what kind of union leadership, are we dealing with in Poland today?

DS: Lech Walesa is both "national savior" and labor leader, and therein lies his dilemma. Solidarity is no longer the power it once was. To be more accurate, the people are still grateful to Solidarity for helping them to get rid of the previous regime, and that is why the presidential poll is a contest between two of its representatives. But the workers no longer trust it as the defender of their interests. It now has a smaller membership than the "official" unions did under the old regime: It claims 2 million members, a mere fifth of its size in 1981. The price paid for its strategy is a heavy one, and it will continue to be so, since the economic reform, as it unfolds, should hurt the strongholds of Solidarity: such concentrations of labor as the shipyards, the steel mills and the mines.

Walesa owes his original rise to his uncanny sensitivity to the mood of his fellow workers. His attack on Mazowiecki was not only due to resentment and ambition. It also reflected the undoubted discontent of the rank and file. As we saw, the target—the survival of the *nomenklatura*—was well chosen. Yet this campaign reveals both the contradictions and the bluff in Walesa's position. Opting for commercial privatization, as he does, one has in Poland three potential customers: foreign investors, who display no great enthusiasm and in any case can't buy everything; successful speculators and other black marketeers; and finally, the industrial *nomenklatura*, people who were promoted to important managerial jobs but who at least know how the enterprises function. The prerogatives of that last group could be curbed by giving more power to the workers. But you cannot have self-management *and* the blessing of the International Monetary Fund.

Naturally, you can kick out a few of the *nomenklatura* and get some jobs for the boys. You may also carry out a purge more easily in education or in the media. However, in a country that a year ago had 2 million Communist Party members, if your purge is not limited to proven criminals, if people are removed from their jobs not because of incompetence but because of their party card, this would result in a massive witch hunt that would rapidly put an end to Poland's budding democracy.

Solidarity is now partly an electoral machine. It is mainly a transmission belt, though an inefficient one because the leadership is divided and the membership bewildered. Solidarity will recover its historic significance only when, under its own name or otherwise, it resumes its original function as the autonomous representation of the Polish working class.

LG: The highly appropriate reference to self-management helps bring an underlying problem of cultural and ideological confusion (a kind of intellectual poverty) into sharp focus. The sustained movement toward self-management within Solidarnosc—emanating from what was colloquially known as "the Network" of shop-floor self-management committees throughout Poland—represented a significant moment of theoretical and practical effort in the long struggle for democratic forms in human societies. Here was no tiny vanguard of visionaries hovering around some remote kitchen table—say on the fringes of the Paris Commune in 1871 or in isolated Bakuninist circles in Spain in 1938. Here was no solitary theorist speculating, like Jefferson or Marx, about the necessity for self-organized "elementary republics" or "the free association of free individuals" as vigorous popular formations to protect new democratic forms from erosion at the hands of self-interested elites.

On the contrary, the Network's steps toward self-management took place at the very heart of a vast popular movement with genuine social presence and with serious and conceivably attainable ambitions to influence social policy in an immediate and practical way. Grounded in the "social enterprise" and conceptualized as a functioning network of self-managed factories in a self-managed economy presided over by social structures harmonious with a self-managing republic, the Network's efforts, both its sustained internal dialogue and its structural tensions, would seem to have been of intense interest to residents of a hierarchically organized and weary world.

But it is not so. The socialist Neal Ascherson, for example, passed over the subject in one sentence in his book-length analysis. The liberal Timothy Garton Ash also exhibited an amiable disdain for what he regarded as a transparently utopian tangent. Sociologists and historians, both in Poland and in the West, have treated the entire subject abstractly—that is, in a manner that did not bring to the self-management movement enough sustained seriousness to penetrate to, or evaluate, its interior dynamics or promise. Visible here are the debilitating limitations pervading contemporary politics, an experientially narrowed perception concealed beneath a mask of literary sophistication. It is not fashionably urbane to take the idea of popular democracy seriously anymore: The historical record of the past 200 years seems to make the idea sound fanciful. We have not really pondered the prerequisites with sustained intensity because, at bottom, most political and intellectual elites do not trust "the people." In due course we have unwittingly developed categories of political description that obscure this pervasive and crippling resignation.

The extreme social and economic crisis of the autumn of 1981 overwhelmed the self-management movement because the very survivability of Solidarnosc itself became the all-encompassing question. The numbing years of martial law that followed further obliterated the immediate relevance of self-management, so the politics of 1989-90 have fixated on state policy at the top rather than upon the necessarily evolutionary formulas for self-management from below. With the people effectively pushed off the political stage, we

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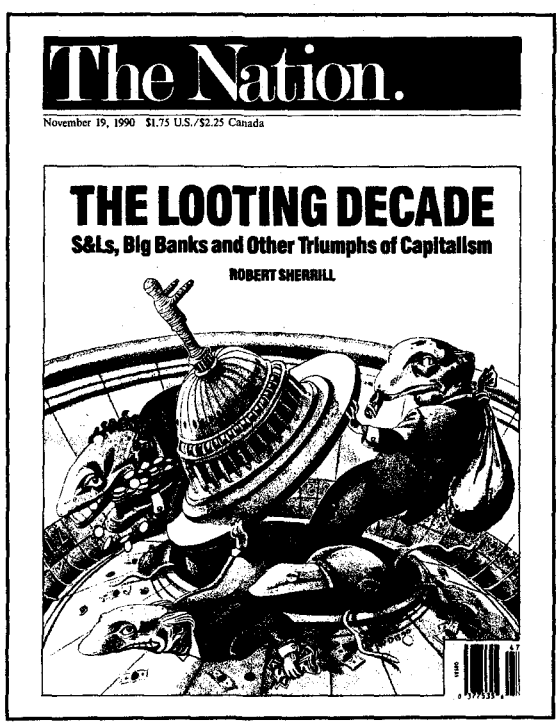
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can return to much more familiar terrain—talking about the upcoming election.

The current political debate in Poland is less about an accelerated transition to a market economy than it is about the strategic capacities of the party apparat—the 60,000-strong *nomenklatura*—to distort the dismantling of the command economy. Nonparty engineers, artisans and technicians remain the functioning brains of an economic system controlled for two generations by shallow opportunists. But as Gorbachev has learned, the marginalization of the *nomenklatura* is a tortuous and debilitating process.

Mazowiecki made a critical error in deciding to keep the horde of party apparatchiks in place. To millions of Poles of all classes, the daily spectacle of watching these well-dressed functionaries, these despised agents of an authoritarian bureaucracy, function in apparently undisturbed remoteness has been maddening.

The civic insecurity and frustration that daily add numbers of Russians to the Yeltsin camp fuel the same phenomenon in Poland. Campaign debate in Poland is not, at root, about the market economy. The social consequences of prolonged Leninist rule have decisively narrowed, at least for the present, the range of debate over the basic economic trajectory of post-Leninist societies.

More centrally, this election is not a debate about popular democratic forms. That subject has been lost—by Mazowiecki, by Walesa and by observers in the West. The focus is on politics at the top, not on the suffocation of democratic politics at the base. State politics has taken over again and, assisted by the preoccupations that shape our own lenses, remains at the center of our gaze.

Poland's politics are particularly distinctive in that a number of social and cultural factors carry enormous weight—including, among others, disputes over church and state, feelings about abortion, nationalist nostalgia, anti-Semitism, an intelligentsia that yearns for political relevance. How important a role do you think these have played in the current presidential election?

DS: In shorthand: The Jewish question, alas, will never again be a major question in Poland for the tragic reason that there are only a few thousand remnants of a population once 3.5 million strong. Anti-Semitism without Jews—the search for scapegoats and other irrational solutions—is thus a symptom of a deeper disease. Walesa is neither philo- nor anti-Semitic. He is determined to get to the top. If some members of his Centrum, or Center Alliance (which is a misnomer), or allies even further to the right begin to ask questions about the real or imaginary Jewish origins of the "Warsaw set" backing Mazowiecki, he will do nothing to lose the votes this may bring him.

The Catholic Church has not expressed a preference between the two men. It wants to get as much as possible out of whichever of them is elected, and it has quite an appetite. It has already obtained religious instruction in schools and should soon get the criminalization of abortion. Divorce may come next. The church wants money, political influ-

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ence and cultural domination. It knows that the moment is particularly propitious and wants to institutionalize its advantages. Now that the "leading role" of the party has been eclipsed, will we have that of the church?

Walesa, who accepts the equation that a Pole equals a Catholic, is undisturbed by this offensive. The liberal Catholics close to Mazowiecki are perturbed. But because the Pope stands behind the Primate, Józef Cardinal Glemp, on such issues as abortion, they will not do much. Individually, some deputies will vote against the abortion bill, as some senators did, but as a group ROAD will not take a stand against the intrusion of the church in secular affairs.

In this growing darkness there is one ray of hope. The church may be overplaying its hand. Before the war it was weaker. The Communist regime bestowed upon it a second virginity by eliminating its awkward allies (landowners and capitalists) and representing it as the pillar of resistance against injustice and oppression. Now this is over and the aggressive politics of the church are beginning to antagonize people. Perhaps in a not too distant future politics will be conducted in Poland in a normal and not a theocratic framework.

LG: This is a central question, since cultural "weight" is enormous in all modern societies. But it is a subject that is clearly too formless and dynamic to be dealt with through static terms of description. Polish workers deeply resent the patronizing proclivities of the intelligentsia and the decade-long carping about Walesa's idiosyncratic speech habits. They also distrust the strategic consequences of such a world view. As one worker summarily put it, "Intellectuals blink at decisive moments and cover their tracks with a lot of words. They remind everyone of high-level party officials." It would be a primitive error to read such remarks simply as code words for anti-Semitism. The latter does exist in Poland—among the Szlachta intelligentsia,* among the entourage of Cardinal Glemp and in certain sectors of the working class. It is less evident than it was in prewar Poland, but, in attenuated form, it is there. Yet it is not helpful to click off our minds in its presence. Both Walesa and Mazowiecki will get votes from anti-Semites. But this election turns on deeper rhythms, namely, pervasive antiparty drives refracted through deep-seated class and cultural memories—above all, diverse understandings as to which sectors of Polish society created Solidarnosc and different understandings of the dream it embodies.

It is inviting to employ terms like "nationalist nostalgia" as interpretive tools to create a usable focus, but the invitation must be declined. First, nationalist sentiments in a country with Poland's history of outside oppression obviously carry a distinctly different meaning than in, let's say, western Germany. Writing from a part of the United States in which Jesse Helms recently has rather desperately invoked a particular kind of tribal nationalism in an unexpectedly close campaign against an engaging and effective black

* The term refers to the old petty nobility and to the "noble ethos" still discernible within the pattern of social attitudes common among the contemporary intelligentsia.

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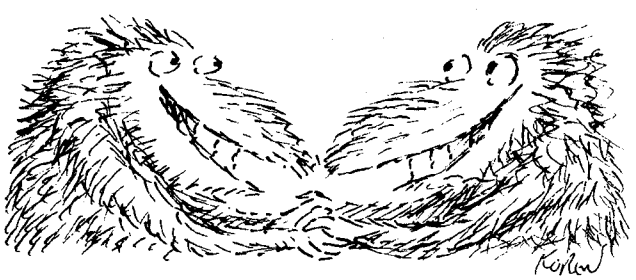

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opponent, I am reminded once again that Poles do not have a monopoly on nationalism, nostalgic or otherwise. As for the Catholic Church, its presence in Poland continues to be, as it historically has been, ubiquitous.

Let's assume for a moment that a Walesa victory is the outcome of the vote on November 25. Can one predict, in general terms, how he might exercise his new presidential powers?

DS: Walesa belongs to that rare breed of politicians who hear voices and have an eye for the main chance. The choice, in Michnik's vivid words, is between the rule of law and that of the sheriff. Yet even the latter's exercise of power depends on many factors. It depends on whether Walesa, to switch metaphors, wins in the first round by a knockout, or in the second on points. With 80 percent of the vote you are a plebiscitary monarch, with 55 percent you are merely a president. It depends even more on the patience of the population. If the people remain resigned to the candidates' common economic policy, there will be a difference in men rather than in manner between the old government and the new. It is only when discontent reaches a breaking point, particularly among the workers, that Walesa may try to divert it through a search for scapegoats, through McCarthyite witch hunts or other undemocratic outlets. If a populist is one who sees real popular grievances but gives them distorted, irrational solutions, Walesa may prove himself such a leader.

But what about rational solutions, what about the hopes once entertained that Poland might invent something that follows neither the Stalinist nor the capitalist model? Such hopes now lie shattered. Here, like everywhere else in Eastern Europe, the final bankruptcy of Stalinism has left the very idea of socialism discredited, however unfairly, and it is not the Polish Communist Party, dressed up in social democratic clothing, that will render it attractive once again. For such a revival one must look to a resurrection of the alliance that was glimpsed ten years ago between workers rediscovering their power and large sections of the intelligentsia joining them in a common search for mastery over society and their own lives. To speak candidly, this prospect looms distant on the horizon. But then the Poles are now being given a crash course in the meaning of capitalism.

LG: Poland has what my colleague Roman Laba calls a "dinosaur economy," a gift from Stalinist obsessions with economies of scale. Not only is the base of the industrial structure grievously oversized, outmoded and uncompetitive, there is a vastly neglected and undeveloped infrastructure. The next president of Poland will preside over a rusty economic sieve. Unemployment will mire him in a social and political swamp. Hope, patience and a Polish capacity for endurance will delay the inevitable political crisis, but it will consume the president in due course. Because of his tactical skill and his credibility with workers, Walesa might delay the crisis a bit longer than Mazowiecki, but the differences could prove significant only if the West cared enough to provide serious assistance. As matters stand, prospects are not good, not good at all. □

THE PEACE MOVEMENT NOW – III

Peacekeepers For the Gulf

PAUL SAVOY

During the first week of October the House and Senate approved similar versions of a resolution that purports to assert Congressional authority over warmaking power but in reality serves no useful purpose other than self-promotion. The Senate resolution praises President Bush for his leadership in securing United Nations action in the Persian Gulf, approves his deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia and "supports continued action by the President . . . to deter Iraqi aggression and to protect American lives and vital interests in the region." Although the resolution requires that any military action by the President must be undertaken "in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations Security Council and in accordance with United States constitutional and statutory processes," the failure to impose any specific limits on the use of armed force leaves a legal loophole large enough to drive the entire 24th Mechanized Infantry Division through.

Since the enactment of the War Powers Resolution of 1973 federal courts have made it clear that in order to prevent the President from pre-empting Congress's constitutional prerogative of declaring war, lawmakers must act in one of two ways: They must either take affirmative steps to start the clock running on the War Powers Resolution, which requires the President to withdraw troops within sixty days after hostilities have been declared "imminent," or Congress must enact legislation imposing specific restraints on future military action. Congress has done neither.

Representative Dante Fascell, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and George Mitchell, the Senate majority leader and co-sponsor of the Senate resolution, earnestly assured colleagues that this latest measure does not give the President a blank check. However sincere that claim may be, knowledgeable observers must wonder whether Congress's legal advisers have been relying on Cliffs Notes for constitutional law. The reality is that the power to commit the country to war in the Middle East has been passed from Congress to the President. Characterizing the resolution as little more than "a press release for the Senate," Mark Hatfield, one of only three senators who voted against the measure, said, "If we choose not to take any action and to continue to dodge our responsibility, then for God's sake, let us be honest. . . . We are the embodiment of hypocrisy."

It is one of the ironies of the post-cold war period that as U.S. lawmakers once again surrender power to the Presi-

Paul Savoy, a San Francisco attorney, is a member of the board of directors of the Mt. Diablo Peace Center in Walnut Creek, California.

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Must we trade body bags for oil?

Everyone—the President, the Congress, the American people—says they want a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf crisis.

IS THIS SEEKING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION?

The U.S. rushed 230,000 troops into the Persian Gulf—far more than necessary to defend Saudi Arabia or help enforce the United Nations' trade embargo.

President Bush has dismissed every possibility of a non-military solution and has vowed that he would never "yield one inch" in negotiations.

The Pentagon is ready to launch an attack. They estimate that *20,000 U.S. soldiers will die.*

WHY NOT GIVE PEACE A CHANCE?

We seem to be willing to wait forever for mild sanctions to help free South Africa. Why the rush to declare this embargo a failure?

We are told our troops are bored. That the weather is getting bad. That Kuwait is being dismantled.

Are these reasons for 20,000 dead? 50,000? For a new Vietnam? For spending a $1 billion a day?

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George Bush and the Pentagon learned a lesson from Vietnam—act quickly and ask for approval later.

We learned a lesson, too—we must ***speak out now,*** before it is too late.

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OUT NOW—Bring Our Troops Home

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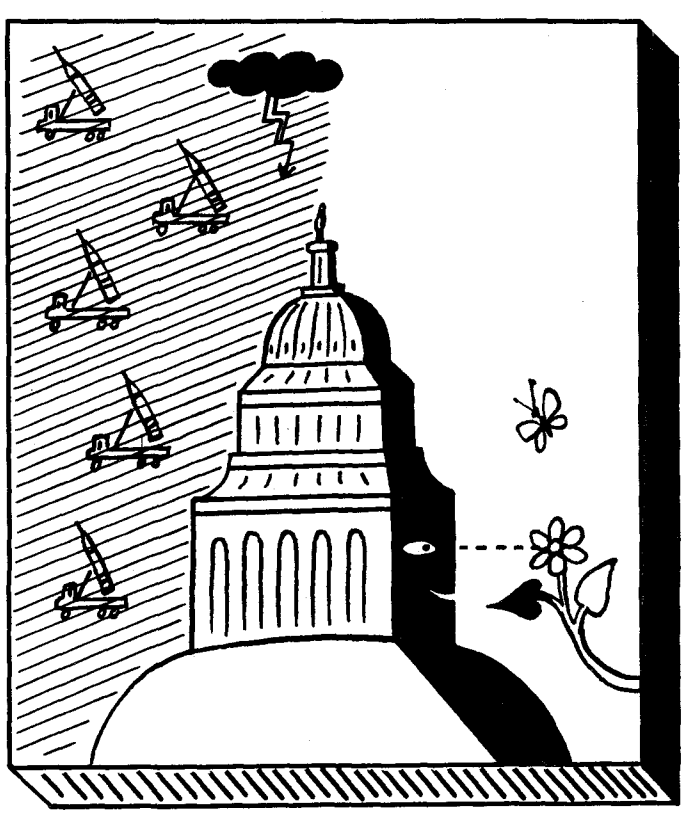
dent, the Soviet legislature has manifested a new democratic assertiveness in foreign policy. In response to criticism from members of the Supreme Soviet that the Kremlin has not consulted the legislative branch in deciding whether to use armed force in the Persian Gulf, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze stated in mid-October, "Any use of Soviet troops outside the country [even as part of a U.N. force] demands a decision of the Soviet Parliament." The same week, Secretary of State James Baker told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who expressed concern that the United States may go to war against Iraq while Congress is in recess until mid-January, that the Administration would "consult" with the Congressional leadership if a decision to take military action is made, but that the executive branch does not feel obligated to obtain advance Congressional authorization, which would deprive U.S. forces of the ability to launch a surprise attack on Iraq.

Two erroneous assumptions underlie the Administration's gulf policy. The first is that the American people would support a war in the gulf. Opinion polls indicate they would not. According to a survey conducted by Americans Talk Security, a bipartisan group of polling firms, nine out of ten Americans are not ready for the United States to start a war, and two-thirds of those surveyed said we should wait indefinitely for sanctions to work. The second erroneous assumption is that there is ample legal justification in the U.N. Charter for unilateral military action by the United States. White House officials take the position that Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which affirms the right of individual and collective self-defense, allows the United States to liberate Kuwait by armed force, but this argument ignores the specific language of the article. It permits "individual or collective self-defence . . . *until* the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." [Emphasis added.] Once the Security Council has adopted collective security measures under Chapter VII of the Charter—as it has done by imposing air and sea embargoes against Iraq—member nations are constrained by the Charter from acting unilaterally or multilaterally to launch an attack.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIS BISHOFS

This is not a prohibition the White House is free to ignore when the U.N. no longer serves U.S. interests. Under the supremacy clause of Article VI of the Constitution, "all Treaties made . . . under the Authority of the United States"—and that includes the U.N. Charter—"shall be the supreme Law of the Land." At a time when the average citizen feels powerless to do anything about the nation's steady drift toward war, the supremacy clause points to one transcendent truth about our constitutional system of government: We are the people and we have the right "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind," as the preamble to the U.N. Charter declares.

The problem with translating this constitutional truth into political reality is that the majority of Americans, who are opposed to starting a war in the gulf, have not been able to communicate their views to Washington. Thus the great challenge today for peace activists and progressives is to find a way to unite this majority, which includes a broad spectrum of political faiths. The immediate goal of a national campaign to mobilize public opinion should be a Public Peacekeeping Resolution. Congress has adjourned, but a concurrent resolution passed at the close of the session empowers the Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader to recall members to Washington "whenever . . . the public interest shall warrant it." They should be summoned to enact legislation prohibiting the introduction of U.S. forces into hostilities in the Persian Gulf region except as authorized by Congress and only as part of an international force under leadership of the United Nations Security Council. The resolution should also call upon the President to initiate direct discussions with Iraq aimed at negotiating a withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, and propose to the U.N. Security Council the establishment of a U.N. peacekeeping force to assume the deterrent function of U.S.-led ground forces in the gulf.

To be sure, the use of armed force even under the vaunted banner of the U.N. should not be treated lightly. The key to a well-governed world is not the endowment of the U.N. with the coercive capacity of a planetary police force but the power of the credible threat of collective action to create conditions for seeking peaceful and diplomatic solutions to international disputes. Such action is embodied in the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter. After the slaughter of more than 60 million people in two world wars, the U.N. was established to put an end to fighting, not to authorize a third world war.

International armed force has proved to be effective when used in a peacekeeping capacity, that is, to disengage warring factions in cases of civil war or to contain further aggression

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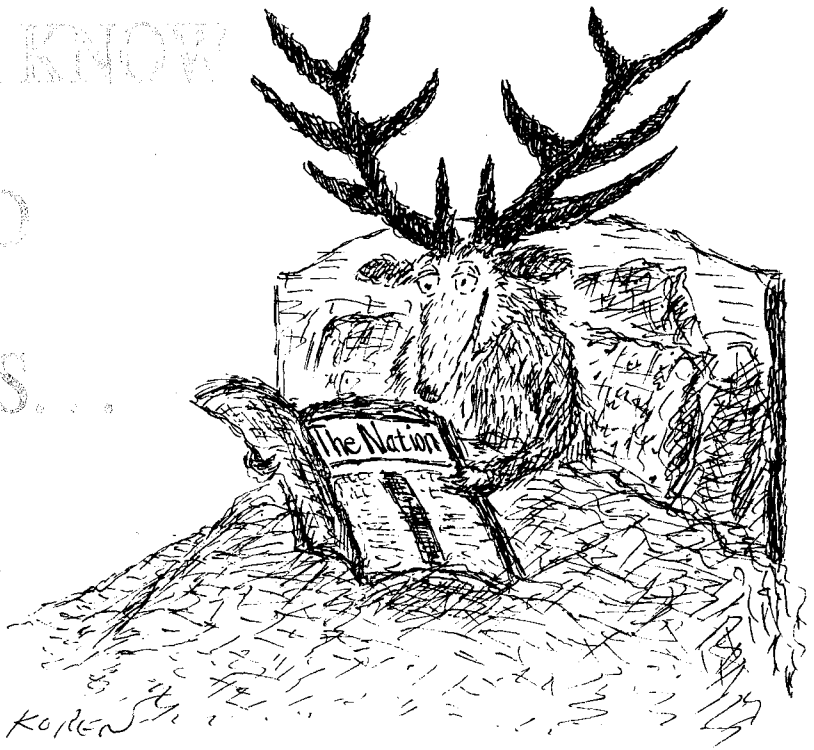

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when hostilities across international borders are involved. The use of armed force to restore the status quo ante is, as the Korean conflict demonstrated, a far more perilous means of achieving the high purposes to which the U.N. is dedicated.

The paradox of world peace is that in a world lacking the consensual foundations for international peace and security, there can be no negotiations with aggressor nations without the credible threat of collective force, but the risks of global conflict are so great that collective force should not be used without first exhausting the channels of diplomacy. The challenge facing the U.N. today is to combine the techniques of diplomacy, peacekeeping and collective security by constructive devotion to those features of international organization that make reliance upon consent rather than carnage at once so necessary and so precarious. The kind of public peacekeeping resolution proposed here would preserve the unprecedented international solidarity and threat of force against Iraq's aggression while providing time for economic sanctions and serious diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement. This is a principled and pragmatic solution that the public would support and Congress would enact if progressive leaders could organize public opinion effectively and deliver the message to Washington.

The emphasis of a new kind of citizen politics, as Frances Moore Lappé has suggested, should be on "listening to people's concerns rather than the typical approach of coming up with a manifesto and then trying to sell it to people." An effective strategy should not only be responsive to the widespread public sentiment in favor of a policy of diplomacy backed by collective force in the Middle East. It should build as well on the growing disgust among the American people at the extent to which the democratic process has become a mindless advertising campaign in which the individual citizen is reduced by the news media to passive spectator and manipulated consumer. There is something profoundly disturbing about the way in which the mainstream media have been reporting events relating to the gulf crisis, conveying the unmistakable impression that war might or might not come, but in no event will you, the reader or television viewer, have anything to say about it.

The real danger to the democratic way of life today is not fascist aggression across international boundaries but what Hannah Arendt, in her classic work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, identified as the psychology of the mass man. Far more subtle and therefore more frightening than any of the nightmare visions of George Orwell, mass society arises when citizens of democratic nations are alienated from active participation in public life and administered by elected representatives incapable of governing. With the help of the mass media and mass education, it is possible to create a mass society within the framework of the democratic process, a society that makes the citizen, psychologically and politically, a totalitarian person—a totalitarian person with democratic and libertarian convictions, to be sure, but no less a mass man or woman.

There is a pressing need to create a broad coalition of mainstream and progressive organizations aimed at empowering citizens to pursue peace as a human right rather than leaving it as the prerogative of a few federal officials. Only then will it be possible for individuals to resist the mass character of modern democratic government and oppose the rapid deployment of George Bush's brave new world. □

W.F.T.U. CONGRESS

Statist Unions Wither Away

DENIS MACSHANE

A ticklish problem confronts protocol experts in Moscow. From November 13 to November 20 the congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions convenes in the Soviet capital. Listed among its member confederations are unions from both Iraq and Kuwait. Will the Iraqis be allowed to represent the toiling masses of Kuwait? Or worse, will the Iraqi members seek W.F.T.U. support for a resolution condemning the United Nations for its brazen attempt to interfere in internal Iraqi affairs?

The W.F.T.U., launched with fanfare in Paris in 1945 to unite the world's unions, is now in considerable disarray. Depicted in cold war terminology as a propaganda trumpet for Soviet policy and ideology, the W.F.T.U. has representatives from non-Communist countries in which unions are part of the state apparatus. Many Arab and African unions are members. Emirs and lifetime presidents may eschew Communism, but they welcome the Leninist principle of government-party control of the labor movement.

The November congress, convened to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of the federation, will be a sad affair. The main unions in Eastern Europe have quit. W.F.T.U. training schools for Third World trade unionists in East Germany and Czechoslovakia have closed down. Its principal affiliate in the West, France's Confédération Générale du Travail, has sunk to barely 700,000 members out of a total work force of 26 million.

Perhaps the biggest crisis facing the W.F.T.U. is the future course of trade unionism in the Soviet Union and its current (but for how long?) republics. At its recent congress, the once monolithic, centralized All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (A.U.C.C.T.U.) re-formed itself as a confederation, with its constituent industrial unions theoretically free to do as they please. A younger, pro-Gorbachev leadership is emerging in some unions, representing a shift in power from one faction of the *nomenklatura* to another.

It is not that rank-and-file Soviet workers have voted to

Denis MacShane works for the Geneva-based International Metalworkers Federation. His book International Labour and the Origins of the Cold War *will be published by Oxford University Press in 1991.*

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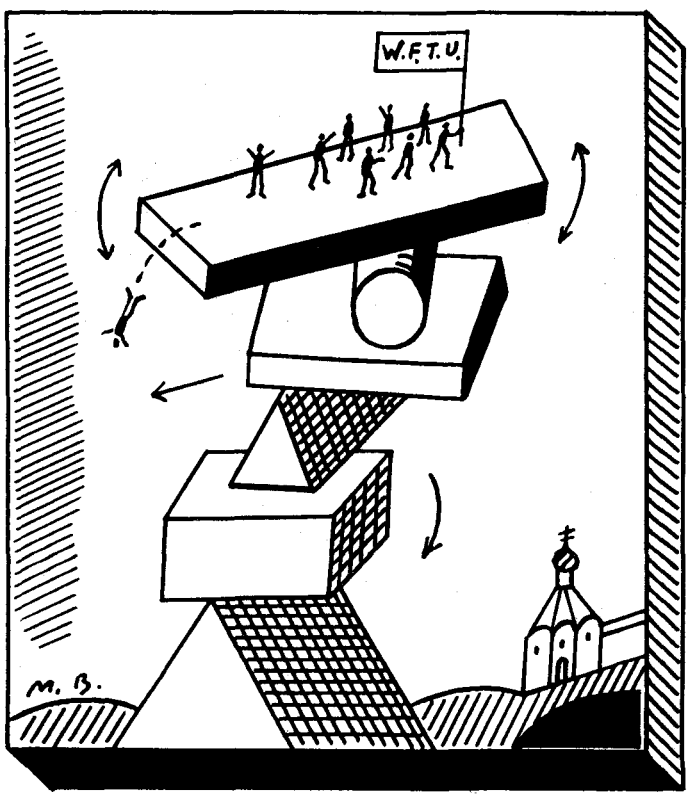
become independent but that Gorbachev has ordered the unions to cut themselves loose from their democratic centralist moorings. In theory, the official Soviet labor movement represents 142 million workers, a sizable bloc that could be wielded against economic reform. Thousands of trade union officials, who have for decades been no more than political personnel managers in the factories, now have to work out their future and decide what alliances to make to guarantee their own standard of living.

The warm embrace of unemployment by "radical" Soviet economists as the preferred market mechanism to enforce productivity also strikes at the trade union base inside the Soviet Union. So if the Soviet trade unions were to move into the opposition camp and become defenders of workers' jobs and incomes, their differences with their Western counterparts would become less clear-cut. And if the A.U.C.C.T.U. disavows its subordination to the state, its alliance with W.F.T.U. affiliates from, say, Vietnam or Ethiopia becomes more and more odd.

Two further problems loom on the horizon for the Soviet labor confederation as it grapples with the future of the W.F.T.U. First, its own days may be numbered. More than 300 independent labor organizations have now been set up in the Soviet Union, the best known being the breakaway mineworkers' union. Second, the Chinese trade union confederation, which has not taken part in W.F.T.U. affairs since the Sino-Soviet split thirty years ago, is now talking about reactivating its membership. The Chinese authorities, horrified at the evidence of worker involvement in the pro-democracy movement, may seek to reassert the federation's profile as a state-oriented international labor body grouping unions in the South against the "imperialists" of the North.

In Moscow itself, Soviet trade union officials tell visitors that, in any case, they are "fed up with paying for all the blacks"—uncoded language for the Third World affiliates of the W.F.T.U. The Soviet trade unions and the old-style Eastern European unions still run by *nomenklatura* functionaries desperately want to link up with Western European labor organizations and will jettison any lingering notions of Communist solidarity with darker-skinned comrades in the process.



Forty years ago, many Western trade unions walked out of the W.F.T.U., claiming that it was being used to promote Soviet policies, especially against Marshall Plan aid, and to support Communist unionism that either sought to replace colonial with Communist rule in the Third World or advocated statist instead of market economies in Western Europe and Japan. One might suppose that the Western trade unions would now be congratulating themselves on having "won" their segment of the cold war. But if the W.F.T.U. is in disarray, the international activities of the Western unions face even greater challenges.

The march to capitalism in Eastern Europe is causing immense social dislocation. Mexican-style *maquiladora* economies are on the rise in Poland and Hungary. It is now harder for Poles to travel from free Poland to the West than it was in the days of totalitarian Communism, so scared are Western Europeans of allowing Poles, hungry for jobs and hard currency, across the Oder-Neisse line. After thirty-five years of training, the Austrian Army is finally seeing action—patrolling Austria's borders to keep out Romanians looking for work.

Matsushita now buses in poor workers from eastern Germany to work on an hourly basis assembling electronic products at its western German factories. Their wages are half those of western German workers.

In Linz, Austria, in September, at a conference of labor historians, Grant Adebikov of the Moscow Institute of Marxism-Leninism talked of the huge mistake made in the 1920s when Soviet trade unions were subordinated to central party and government control and lost all independence. "The tragedy after 1945 was that this Stalinist-Trotskyist form of trade unionism was imposed by the Red Army on the workers of Eastern Europe with the disastrous consequences we can now see," he added.

If you close your eyes, the arguments and language are not so different from those advanced by A.F.L. leaders Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown as they launched their crusade in the late 1940s against Communist unions and the W.F.T.U.

Now the reds have been routed. But will the victory turn to ashes as the decline of Communist unions leads not to the rise of free unions but to the spread of de-unionization or a growth in company-oriented and pliant unionism with no social vision beyond the wage packet? The East-West labor conflict is over, but conditions are not propitious for creating effective North-South international labor dialogue and solidarity. That is the new task for unions that are serious about their business. Celebrating the last rites of the W.F.T.U. in Moscow will only reveal the immensity of the challenges that lie ahead. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Blackfeet Barrister

DAVID SEALS

THE INDIAN LAWYER. *By James Welch. Norton. 349 pp. $19.95.*

In his first novel, *Winter in the Blood*, James Welch took us out into the bleak Montana landscapes where Indians live in shacks of despair, forlorn and forgotten by the rest of the world like brown leaves blowing in the late autumn breezes. It was a cold and lonely world, but it is one that many Indians know only too well. The despair and hopelessness that cause even worse despair in alcoholism, and the violence begot by the poisons in the heart and blood, were painted in simple ugly strokes by Welch, and I almost couldn't bear it.

He was telling the truth, as Louise Erdrich has done in *Love Medicine* and her other novels, but it is so grim and relentless that most Indians can't read it. I have had Indians tell me they don't want to read my novel *The Powwow Highway* either, simply because it is modern and, as one woman said, "I get too much of that shit every day in my life to also want to read about it! No thanks." When she finds out it is a comedy that points out all the fun Indians also have, well, her eyes light up and she says, "Oh, it shows the good things about us?"

We are not used to being portrayed in books and movies as anything other than savages, or else winos and welfare cases. Life is indeed cruel and hopeless for many of our people, and I appreciate Welch's writing about his Blackfeet people, and telling it the way it is. The tragedy needs to be examined by the mainstream population as a telling example of some of the ugly hidden truths buried deep inside this country. We are reminders that this is not always the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave." It also needs to be said that Indians are not always the poor innocent victims, either, and this Welch and Erdrich have done admirably. They show us as people, fallible and occasionally virtuous, just about like anybody else.

David Seals is the author of The Powwow Highway *(Penguin/New American Library) and the forthcoming* Thunder Nation *(Sky & Sage Books).*

The Indian Lawyer departs from this "Tragic School" a little and shows a good, successful Indian man who has not fallen into the alcoholic or political clichés. Sylvester Yellow Calf has had it made all his life: basketball star, respected and able lawyer, tall and handsome and sensitive. He lives in our modern world and he speaks and acts in a way recognizable to all Americans. He is courted by the Democratic Party to run for Congress, he is on the Montana Parole Board, he is "in." He has it all. Beautiful women fall all over him.

But that's not quite how Mr. Yellow Calf sees it. Almost insecure with his success, almost guilty that he has left his people destitute in the dust far behind him, he doubts the whole world into which he has emerged, the clean white world of big and powerful law firms, the safe streets of booming Helena, Montana. He says, "I felt like an impostor, a poseur, an opportunist who would pay lip service to the issues involved in order to get himself something he hadn't earned." Therein lies a strong theme in contemporary literature about Indians—that, somehow, American civilization is corrupt and we are hopelessly caught in it. We can't go home again to the wretched reservations, the buffalo are gone, but there is nothing comparable to replace the good strong cultures we used to have. This conclusion represents a failure of many native writers trapped in the mainstream morass, who have gone off to the big cities of America, who have lost sight, I feel, of the sublime spirituality bursting like the new buffalo herds all over the Western prairies. Welch and Erdrich don't see the magic in the indigenous foundation so closely tied to those same bleak landscapes back home, the mysterious and wonderful symbols our elders and medicine people are teaching us as the way to understand the vast puzzles of nature.

In one scene Yellow Calf goes home to his Blackfeet reservation—Welch is Blackfeet and Gros Ventre—at Browning, situated near the gorgeous Glacier National Park near the Canadian border. His traditional grandmother wanted him to take her grandfather's ancient war medicine bundle with him when he went off to law school years ago, but he left it behind.

> Sylvester pulled on his Levi's and shirt. He heard the faint buzz of voices and laughter on the TV in the living room. Sounded like some kind of game show. He looked at himself in the mirror above the child's dresser. His black hair looked dull and his close-set dark eyes were foggy with fatigue. He knocked on the scratched, sorrel-colored dresser top and noticed the pouch. He picked it up and felt it. The covering was soft-tanned hide made hard by the years. The top was tied shut by thin yellowing sinew. He held it before his eyes by the two rawhide strings. It was completely unadorned and heavier than Sylvester remembered. It was his great-great-grandfather's war medicine, the medicine his grandmother had tried to give him when he went away to college. He held it to his neck and looked at himself in the mirror again. He tried to see in the mirror a Blackfeet warrior, getting ready to raid the Crow horses, but all he saw was a man with circles under his eyes, a faint stubble of beard on his chin, a man whose only war, skirmish, actually, was with himself. The new warriors. He remembered Lena Old Horn's brochures and articles about Indian lawyers. He wasn't even a new warrior. He was a fat cat lawyer, helping only himself, and some fatter cats, get richer. He put the pouch carefully on the dresser.

He goes on to run for Congress, almost assured of victory with his record as a sports star and the fat cats backing him. But then harsh reality intrudes on his too-perfect world. One of the cons to whom he has denied parole sets out to blackmail him, and his campaign to "really help the people" ends before it begins. He is disgraced and goes to work with a Sioux tribe in North Dakota on a crucial water rights case. It is a real comedown for a man like Sylvester Yellow Calf, who thinks he has failed because he didn't make it big by going to Congress.

It is a strange conclusion for Welch to come to. We can't help our people as much if we are working at the low-budget, grass-roots level, out in the wilds of North Dakota? Mightn't it be better if we learn a little humility from our grandmothers and accept the gifts of our great-great-grandfathers and bring the knowledge of this century into a kind of synthesis with what was good about the "primitive" times? Welch seems to be saying no to that question in all his books. It is like the good cop–bad cop

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scenario of Tony Hillerman's mystery novels set in a Navajo locale in New Mexico and Arizona. There is something a little silly about all that "hocus-pocus" religious stuff. Sylvester Yellow Calf's own grandfather called Indian religion hocus-pocus and was buried with a Catholic ceremony. Hillerman's proper tribal policemen don't cuss too much, or scratch, or get too mystical or wild. They are good, safe, friendly Indians.

Welch's and Erdrich's Indians wander off into blizzards and die in despair and hopelessness, without the transcendent visions so vital to so many Indians that I know, and which have been the secrets that have kept us alive despite 500 years of genocide.

Welch wrote in *Winter in the Blood*, "I felt no hatred, no love, no guilt, no conscience, nothing but a distance that had grown through the years." His depiction of life in prison, so familiar to so many of us, is also brutally honest, and unbearable. A high percentage of Indians must turn to crime to live, and crime begets the same violence that alcohol does, further deepening the downward spiral away from our spiritual roots, ruining our self-esteem and the extended family circles so crucial to our cultures. As Dennis Banks once said, "It's hell to be an Indian," and James Welch illustrates it relentlessly.

The Indian Lawyer is a good book, but it is a little alien to Indians. It was easy to read: The story moves well and the prose is recognizably competent and polished. I was reminded of Evan Hunter and Irwin Shaw—good writers, if not great ones. The storytelling is very "American," if I may say so, by which I mean it is linear and the characters are believable and the reader does not have to dwell in deep dissertations or complex stylistic extravaganzas such as we must endure at the hands of so-called great writers like Joyce or Proust. The novel contains good, fast-paced action with succinct insight into our ordinary dilemmas.

James Welch is obviously an intelligent and kind man; he cares about Indians and knows exactly the way things are. He is also a teacher and it shows—his tenses agree with persons, nouns and verbs are all in their expected places, objects agree with subjects. He has written a very "authentic" book, except, as you may have surmised by now, in the style of the storytelling itself. Indians, for the most part, prefer oral stories to the written kind. This is due in part to the rampant lying that has been going on about us for centuries in books, but also to the fact that we had no written languages until the invasion from Europe. We still like to talk and watch movies rather than read.

Of course, there are many Indians who like the written word, and there are more and more Indian professors and lawyers all the time. But I feel that polished prose is not inherently where "Indian literature" comes from—not that I wouldn't hate being labeled an "Indian writer," any more than Welch would. But you know what I mean. We speak in the second person and the grammar ain't as good as when we're speaking it. That's why most Indians see the movie but don't read the book.

And it is here that we have a divergence in culture. Most Indians probably don't know who James Welch is, or Louise Erdrich, let alone read their books. Most Indians don't know how much good Welch and Erdrich are doing for them in the mainstream culture, by educating the ignorant white folks, by teaching you that we are real people and not just Hollywood cartoons. I'm very pleased to see a few Indians breaking the barriers into New York publishing.

But the essential barriers of language are not tumbling down, in my view. If you want to get published, you had better write clean, clear, polished prose and tell a tightly constructed, tightly paced story. You had better, as my editor at Penguin/NAL explained, "make it accessible to white Americans." You can try to be "poetic," like Scott Momaday or Leslie Marmon Silko, but don't expect to be a best seller or get much distribution or sympathy from the big boys in New York.

It's a fundamental compromise that non–First World Americans are expected to make—at least if we ever expect to make it into the high-finance world of Good English. I can see the professors cringing now at my (deliberately) weak grammar in this article. We're expected to write like Stephen King to succeed—but couldn't we at least be allowed to write like Solzhenitsyn?

James Welch is a lot better than Stephen King, of course—although I think King was probably born with a lot of talent at one time. I didn't like Welch's second book, *The Death of Jim Loney*, for the very reason I'm ranting about now. He seemed to be struggling to find his tribal voice, but somebody somewhere (some goddamn editor, probably) was choking it off. It came out garbled.

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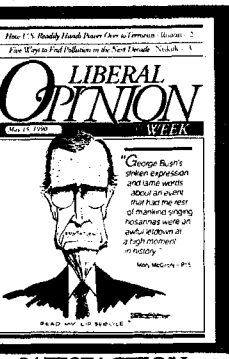

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Fools Crow was his obligatory historical novel, I suppose; but it was also puzzling to us in South Dakota, as there was then still living a very famous and respected Lakota elder by the same name. So I was confused as to whether it was another biography or what, and didn't read it. *Loney* had also discouraged me.

So where does all this leave *The Indian Lawyer*? Slick and sympathetic, just like the main character. Indians are "in" this year, just like we were a couple decades back with a flurry of things like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and blockbusters like *Little Big Man*. Lots of Indians are making it in big law firms now, and fighting for our treaty rights and religious rights, and maybe we'll even get rid of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. So why are we poorer than ever, sicker than ever? Why do we have to write polished prose to make it in America? □

Bewitched

MELISSA PRITCHARD

SEVENTH HEAVEN. *By Alice Hoffman. G.P. Putnam's Sons. 256 pp. $19.95.*

In 1959, when Alice Hoffman's latest novel, *Seventh Heaven*, begins, I was 11 years old, with an aunt whom, even at my sexually unripened age, I understood as dangerous, in contradictory ways, to married men and women. She was unconscionably beautiful, stylish beyond prudence, a 1950s Cleopatra. The men had no resistance; the women, my mother among them, had plenty. Wittingly or not, my aunt threatened the order and safety of things, the theoretic inviolability of marriage and family. She was too alluring, too sexy, liked men and dancing—what could be worse? She belonged in New York. Even my uncle, in a jealous rage one summer night, placed a white styrofoam head, her wig still on it, beside the swimming pool and coolly sent a bullet through it. Women like my aunt, women like Hoffman's heroine, Nora Silk, scarcely realizing what demons of malcontent they unleash, are anathema, unconscious repudiations of domesticity. These are the female pariahs, enchantresses, seductresses. In a Western society equating eros with evil, they are modern-day sorceresses.

Indeed, Alice Hoffman is wittily direct in her equation of Nora Silk with the community witch. She dresses in black; her eyes are described as blacker than black; two of her neighbors, one obsessively lusting after her, the other a neighborhood Elvis who will become her lover, first see Nora shortly after she has moved into their pristine subdivision, on her roof in predawn darkness with a broom, cleaning leaves from the gutter. Three crows and a black cat, the burning of waxen effigies, witchery and intimations of witchery abound, and Nora, enticing to husbands, suspected by wives, is ominous as a medieval coven huddled on a crossroads at midnight.

In Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, another Nora renounced her domestic incarceration, a theatrically thrilling moment that still reverberates, the slam of the door still echoing. Yet here is her sister, Nora Silk, in 1959, traveling the opposite direction, beating down suburban doors, pleading admission to a retentively ordered tract-home paradise, a Seventh Heaven, seven the symbol of perfect order and, more ominously, of pain.

Nora Silk exits off the Southern State Parkway in a beat-up Volkswagen with her 8-year-old son, Billy, and baby, James; she's freshly divorced and desperate to find a place in that ubiquitous dream of the 1950s, analgesic to America's post-Bomb guilt, the suburbs, where external order and addictive neatness prevail, where the two unspoken rules are Mind your own business and Tend to your lawn. Ironically, Nora is inwardly conventional, admitting to herself she would have put up with her two-timing magician husband had he not abandoned her. But Nora—that most lethal of subdivision prowlers, a divorcée—with her toreador pants, Elvis collection and Ambush perfume, sets down startling roots in the prefab heaven of Hemlock Street. Her first act, moving in on a hot August afternoon, is to bake cookies. Indeed, throughout the novel, Nora tries baking her way into acceptance. Macaroni and cheese, tuna and noodles, meatloaf, junket and rice puddings, Bosco: This is the blandest diet on earth, but Nora is determined to get the recipes right. She supports herself and the boys selling ladies' magazine subscriptions, working as a manicurist at the local beauty salon and distributing that latest household statement, Tupperware. Here is terrain Hoffman has traversed in previous novels such as *At Risk* and *Illumination Night*, revealing tender points of emotional connection between individuals, families and neighborhoods. Ordinary is scarcely mundane, she insists, her characters' deceptively simple lives, and thereby our own, fraught with opportunity for transformation and revelation. Compassionate rather than dispassionate, Alice Hoffman's greatest strength is her unabashed advocacy of the healing power of human love.

Yet beneath the pervasive, relentless scent of Bon Ami, Airwick and Lysol, back of the tidy conviction that not only is cleanliness next to godliness, it *is* godliness, there is fierce xenophobia, a thick atmosphere of repressed desire and fear of change. Nora and her eldest son are deliberate outcasts, cruelly snubbed. In a place where the color scarlet is tolerated only in the maraschino cherries that dot the junket pies and tapioca puddings, Nora's vermilion nails blare out a disturbing, unwanted message. Indeed, she has an uncanny gift for matching color to client in the beauty salon, blithely advising the women to toss out their humdrum pinks and opt for the brightest oranges, flaming scarlets, vivid fuchsias.

On a street so new it resembles a Monopoly board, named Hemlock after a lethal respiratory narcotic, live the families we witness, the magic of Nora Silk working on them. Joe Hennessy, the dependable policeman, and his wife, Ellen, who would rather scrub the oven burners than make love to her husband; the McCarthy boys, mock delinquents in black leather and fast cars, their girlfriends swooning but stubbornly chaste, and their father, the Saint, who owns the local Texaco; the perfect, perfectly well-off Shapiros—Danny, their high-school boy, smart, athletic and poignantly lonely, and Rickie, their faultlessly pretty, morally bewildered coed; the Durgins, Donna Durgin dieting off so much fat in search of her hidden self that she literally vanishes.

A hazy corona of clairvoyance, an aura of the supernatural, envelops Hemlock Street. Ghosts are seen, voices heard, events eerily anticipated before they happen. Under an antiseptic Pine Sol surface, despite watery, pastel casseroles, Bermuda shorts and Peter Pan collars, lurks the unclean morass of cruelty, dis-

Melissa Pritchard is author of the Flannery O'Connor Award–winning story collection Spirit Seizures *(Macmillan) and a forthcoming novel,* Phoenix *(Cane Hill Press).*

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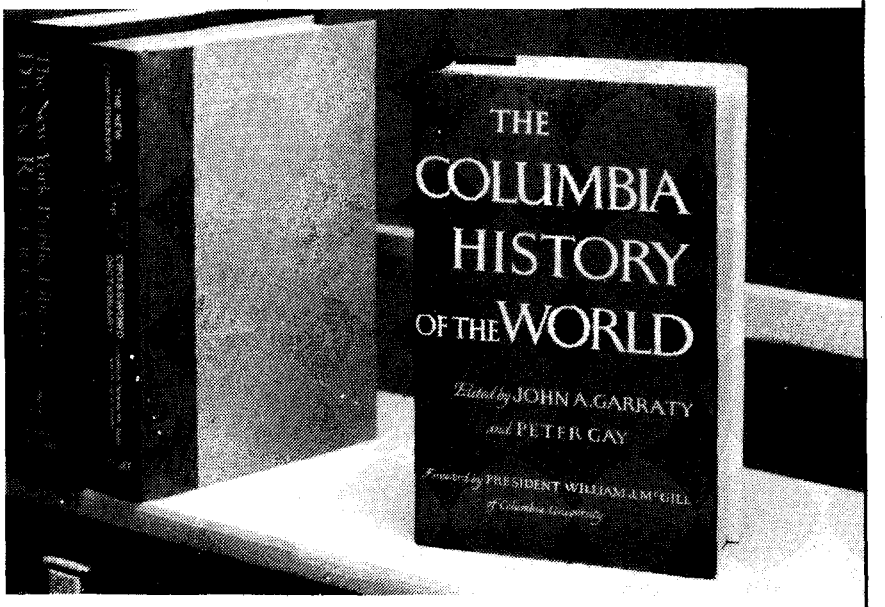

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honesty and violence. Nora's 8-year-old is tormented at school, a crime allowed to flourish as long as adults persist in distortedly viewing childhood as an innocent, benign landscape. But the real victim of *Seventh Heaven* is young Cathy Corrigan, opposite of homecoming queen, opposite of Rickie Shapiro, scapegoated as the town slut. After her accidental death under degrading circumstances, her blond specter haunts Hemlock Street's guilty inhabitants.

As time and events wear on, Alice Hoffman delineates effects both overt and subtle of Nora's spell on these families. The women turn openly inquisitive about her life, her work, her independence and unself-conscious sensuality. Sex before Nora was murky terrain better left to teenagers in parked cars. In these identical houses, it has been diluted into twin beds by a kind of voiceless impotence, and sublimated into well-intentioned but fanatic cleanliness. Nora works like an imported aphrodisiac on these families. She is young Ace McCarthy's clandestine lover, his guide and answer out of the suburbs; indeed, with her subtle encouragement, he exits the insular world of Hemlock Street by the same parkway she had so determinedly entered a year before.

By the end of *Seventh Heaven*, Nora Silk sits in the bleachers wearing Bermuda shorts, watching her son Billy play baseball, both of them finally assimilated into this outwardly wholesome community. Though no longer persecuted, Nora is still alone and the decade of the 1950s is over, the days of Elvis and the McCarthy boys in tight black pants and souped-up cars and swooning girls giving way to images of Danny Shapiro's newly acquired taste for marijuana, and the women's burgeoning feminist discontent. Nora, wishing only to please and placate, has innocently helped unravel a brief, artificially halcyon era, its smug assumption of safety and neutered, lawn-scented naïveté. Well-meaning husbands and wives, their lives slipping by in routine and predictable season, worn to slivers mild as Ivory soap, are startled awake as life, messy, parlous, exciting, fertile, in the goddess incarnation of Nora Silk, moves in, and nothing, ever, is quite the same.

In a wickedly deft reversal, Hoffman indicates the irony of Nora Silk's triumph. How easily one pictures Nora, long after the neighborhood women have formed consciousness-raising groups, gone off to jobs and back to school, baking up a relentless storm, getting the recipes right just as the appetite for them is gone. As for my aunt, there was a scandal, a divorce, and she vanished from the family. I imagine her navigating colorless freeways in a red convertible, circling with purgatorial restlessness a neighborhood where the bland redolence of Nora Silk's casseroles floats like Muzak above meticulous, well-tended lawns. □

Road Warriors

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

OFF THE ROAD: My Years With Cassady, Kerouac, and Ginsberg. *By Carolyn Cassady. Morrow. 436 pp. $22.95.*

The "paper trail" left by the Beats so far, beyond the poetry and fiction they themselves have written, includes biographies, memoirs by friends and lovers, volumes of correspondence, reams of interviews and documentary films. There is even a periodical in England called *The Kerouac Connection*. Some recent biographers particularly, more interested in literary careers than in poetry, lack the perception and intensity of feeling inherent in the lives of their subjects. Carolyn Cassady cannot be accused of that. Her retrospective of life off the road with Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg is loud with the beat of her heart.

Cassady's book is not great literature. It is purgative confession; it is fiction only in the sense that we all make up our own interpretation of our lives and ourselves, dream up the worlds we live in. Nothing could be truer of Carolyn Cassady and her Beat friends and lovers. When young and unfamous, they were a world unto themselves—and this book shows the self-absorption. In the space of 436 pages, from the late 1940s through the 1960s, there is not a single reference (except in a letter from Ginsberg) to what was happening in the crucible of postwar America, to what was going down in the outside world. Wars, revolutions, assassinations: You'd never know it.

She had a hard enough time keeping up with her turned-on men, let alone the rest of the universe. This was before the women's movement, and Cassady had been brought up to know that man was her all. She was a straight arrow, and during her entire devastating marriage to Cassady she still "yearned for a monogamous arrangement." Each chapter recounts "dim hope recycled," and there are sixty-two chapters. In the meantime, over many years, she and Kerouac loved each other, with a tragic joy and joyless despair. She had "never known a man with such a tender heart, nor one so vulnerable." To Kerouac, her love for Neal was "lost in a tangle of shrouds." Her love for Neal was obsessive, yet it wasn't a sexual obsession, it was beyond that. (In fact, in the one actual description of their lovemaking, one gets the impression of Neal as a kind of hydraulic pile-driver.)

Carolyn Cassady's heartbreaker (she once said that a film version called *Heart Beat* should have been called *Heart Break*) embodies the down side of the Beat life, beyond the turned-on visions and beatitudes. They were stone-age hippies in more ways than one, as in Neal's conception of women as "hip chicks." And Carolyn herself, writing of a time deep in the dark ages of feminism, articulates no consciousness of it.

Carolyn was as fascinated by Neal as Kerouac was, who saw him as a kind of Nietzschean hero, not only in *On the Road* but also in *Visions of Cody*, *Dharma Bums*, *Big Sur* and *Desolation Angels*. The name Cody tips us off to the whole myth of the Western hero or antihero that Neal embodied for Kerouac. Physically, Cassady looked and moved exactly like the young Paul Newman in *The Hustler*. He was the archetype of the American frontier man, of which we still have so many examples in America, a man at once outlaw and outsider, in so many Western songs and plays, from *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* to *Easy Rider* to Sam Shepard circling the air base on his horse, or in one of his own plays. The man who wouldn't be reined in when the open range was fenced, Jack London on the open road, Ken Kesey in his day-glo bus (driven by Neal) with its destination sign reading "Furthur," Bob Dylan's Jack of Hearts. Neal's horse was his car, and he rode it over the hill.

The quote from Dante's *Inferno* as a frontispiece to the book is a key to the whole romantic agony. Not much past

Lawrence Ferlinghetti is the author, most recently, of Love in the Days of Rage *(Dutton) and co-editor, with Nancy Peters, of* City Lights Review.

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"the middle of the journey" of their lives, both Kerouac and Cassady lay dead, within nine months of each other. The image of Neal as a doomed illuminated being comes on early. He sped through life too fast for anyone to keep up, including Carolyn, and she was awed by his running discourses "on three levels at once." And she "saw him pursue death with every breath of life." And we see him at one of his trades, as a tire vulcanizer (his other was railroading) in a dark auto shed, a dark figure in goggles, bare to the waist, enveloped in fire and smoke from the burning rubber.

Toward the end, the train of his life seemed to speed up, the tracks narrowing before him. Before he was found dead near the railroad tracks outside San Miguel de Allende in 1968, Carolyn saw how he had "given all of himself away and only the broken shell was left." She wept for "the golden light that had been his gift." She had "always dreaded the thought of Neal as an old man." He would never be one.

Frontier heroes cannot just fade away; they must die in their prime, but live on ever-young in our minds, as Neal does in mine. □

Arizona Dreaming

CAROLYN COOKE

ANIMAL DREAMS. *By Barbara Kingsolver. HarperCollins. 342 pp. $21.95.*

Mark a route from Bobbie Ann Mason's Kentucky through Willa Cather's grainy plains to Georgia O'Keeffe's Southwest, and you will have followed Barbara Kingsolver to the spot on the map where she stakes her literary claim. Kingsolver the Kentuckian has been seduced by the high contrasts of Arizona, by the mythic scale of the landscape: the surreal pinks and red dust, canyons and arroyos, prickly pear and acacia trees, petroglyphs written in the walls of rock, the chalky skulls of buffaloes immortal in the dirt.

Arizona is exotic as the Amazon in *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver's second novel and third work of fiction. Just as Cather's hard-baked plains reflect images of corn bent like the backs of so many yellow-haired Norwegians, so is *Animal Dreams* an elaborate equation between the vibrant landscape and its peoples, the Native Americans whose gentle hands have shaped and lent a rhythm to the land and the later immigrants whose Spanish names Kingsolver slathers on her prose like guacamole on a taco—Emelina and Viola Domingos, Homero, Halimeda and Cosima, Pocha and Juan Teobaldo, Cristobal. Transcending regionalism, Kingsolver makes the Southwest the Garden of Eden, Eldorado and Xanadu rolled into one. It is a state of, well, grace, and she examines the possibilities the town of Grace, Arizona, might imply: being born into Grace, leaving it and returning changed.

Animal Dreams comprises an intelligent, moving chronicle of three lives at different points on a shifting timeline: Cosima (Codi) Noline, the central character, who returns to her hometown of Grace in *dis*grace, having dropped out of medicine in her first year of residency; her eccentric father, Homero (Doc Homer), who serves Grace both as obstetrician and coroner but suffers from Alzheimer's disease; and Halimeda (Hallie) Noline, Codi's sister, an activist who appears in the novel only in her letters home from Nicaragua. At its best, *Animal Dreams* resists summary: It aspires to the gluey, webby, inexplicable condition of life. At its weakest, and like Kingsolver's first novel, *The Bean Trees* (1988), this one flirts with the condition of heartwarming-ness; in celebrating ordinary life, it looks blindly over the occasional meanness or venality that give texture and contrast to our experience of goodness. There are no bad guys in Kingsolver's Graceful universe. Codi's Pueblo-Apache-Navajo lover gives up his brilliant career in cockfighting because Codi—and his mother—ask him to.

The short story is this: Codi Noline has fallen from Grace. She has gone from med school resident to 7-Eleven clerk in one freefall; she has felt the blue pall of the great world, lost her innocence and her empathy in the mountains of Crete, birthplace of Zeus. Sister Hallie, meantime, has become a hero in the classical mode and is off to Nicaragua to save the very soil. Codi, postmodern down to the Billy Idol haircut, tries to save herself. She leaves Carlo, the boyfriend she met back in parasitology, and catches a Greyhound home to Grace, where she spends a year teaching general biology to a gaggle of high school students and chasing down the shadows of her past.

Grace is a town where people roast a goat to make you feel welcome. Everywhere are the brilliant colors of poverty in a warm climate—the reds, oranges and livid purples of the vegetation and women's dresses, the graves meticulously studded with white stones and tequila bottles, "the simplest thing done with the greatest care." Silver loafers pass as *haute couture* in the airless windows of the Hollywood Shop; the Baptist Grocery survives to recall a time of more serious spiritual divisiveness; and the *semilla besada* trees are bedecked hopefully with baby socks and the envelopes of pension checks. When Codi returns to Grace after her years in the great world, everyone remembers how tall she was in seventh grade and her orthopedic shoes.

Those who know Kingsolver from *The Bean Trees* and her 1989 story collection *Homeland and Other Stories* will recognize a few familiar riffs. Her characters have a strong sense of science at work in the world and use the plant and animal kingdoms to explain each other. (In a short story called "Covered Bridges," a young woman who lost a sister to a bee sting devotes herself to saving others via a poison hotline; in *Animal Dreams*, Hallie Noline grows restless dispensing agricultural advice on the Tucson houseplant hotline and makes a beeline south to help peasant farmers reclaim soil denatured by poverty and politics.)

The symbolism of Grace (the town) is almost hopelessly heavy-handed, but she redeems herself with her clear and original voice, her smart, plucky women, her eye for the nuances of personality and the depth of her social and moral concerns. Kingsolver can help you learn how to live.

Her previous fiction shows her mind migrating westward from Bobbie Ann Mason country (Kingsolver grew up in eastern Kentucky, the setting of her stories and starting point of her first novel). Like Mason's characters, Kingsolver's are sometimes funnier than they mean to be. But although the spunky voice from her earlier fiction remains in characters like Emelina Domingos ("Shoot, you look like a fifty-dollar bill. Where'd you get that haircut, Paris, France?") and the woman Codi meets on a bus (" 'I'm Alice Kimball,' the woman explained. 'I get the worst slugs' "), Kingsolver has

Carolyn Cooke teaches the humanities and writing at the Waring School in Beverly, Massachusetts, and at Emmanuel College in Boston. Her latest fiction is forthcoming in the literary quarterly The American Voice.

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here traded some of the raw, hurtling energy of *The Bean Trees* for a spiraling narrative that interweaves Codi's point of view with her father's in a complex investigation of the relationship between memory and truth.

In Doc Homer, Kingsolver brilliantly delineates the quality of a dissolving but wholly practical mind. Lost in time, Doc Homer lives in an overflowing, eternal present. Seeing his 15-year-old daughter pregnant, Doc Homer does not confront her with what he knows, but suffers alone and lets her suffer.

> He feels a sharp pain in his spleen when he looks across the breakfast table each morning and sees this: his wife's face. The ghost of their happiest time returned to inhabit the miserable body of their child. He can't help feeling he has damaged them all, just by linking them together. His family is a web of women, dead and alive, with himself at the center like a spider, driven by different instincts. He lies mute, hearing only in the tactile way a spider hears, touching the threads of the web with long extended fingertips and listening. Listening for trapped life.

Doc Homer has not lost his memory to Alzheimer's, he is drowning in its waves and crosscurrents. Even Codi isn't sure where her father ends and disease begins. Seeing his forceps on the kitchen drainboard, she admits: "This didn't signify any new eccentricity on his part. He'd always had a bizarre sense of utility. I could picture him using the forceps to deliver a head of cabbage from a pot of boiling water. Holding it up. Not in a showoff way, but proud he'd thought of it, as if he were part of a very small club of people who had the brains to put obstetrical instruments to use in the kitchen."

Word gets around that Codi is a doctor bent on amazing Grace—come to save Doc Homer with a miracle cure she learned in Paris, France; come to save the river, which is contaminated by the Black Mountain Mining Company's excretions of sulfuric acid and copper sulfate. Codi demurs. It's her sister Hallie who is the hero, she insists. Hallie is the one who is saving what's worthwhile—rain forests, farmers, the earth itself.

But in Grace heroes are made, not born. They are driven by exigency, by being needed. Even the housewives in the infamous Stitch and Bitch club get serious about saving Grace when events prove dire. (It isn't giving away too much to say that the town, plagued by a toxic river, is saved by a few hundred peacock-feather *piñatas*.)

What impels us to right action? Kingsolver seems to be asking. How do we know what to do? Codi suffers from chronic insomnia and occasional, lurid dreams. Her Native American lover, Lloyd Peregrina, articulate in the high language of legend, tells her, "Animals dream about the things they do in the daytime, just like people do. If you want sweet dreams you've got to live a sweet life."

Like all good novels, *Animal Dreams* is a web of interlacing news. It is dense and vivid, and makes ever tighter circles around the question of what it means to be alive, how to live rightly and sweetly even as we feel the confining boundaries of the skin, the closing walls of past and present, with memory like a badly wired lamp, spitting sparks and shorting out.

The Arizona pueblo of Malpais is the last refuge of free life in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*—a little nation of outsiders, savages so backward they still believe in history and take their morality from Shakespeare. Grace, Arizona, is Codi Noline's refuge from anonymity and empty life. In Grace she discovers the comforts of tradition and obligation, and migrates from the shapeless melancholia of youth to a deeper humanity—living, as Huxley's savage hopes to, painfully and richly and well. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

High & Low at MoMA

When I learned that the Museum of Modern Art in New York was to mount an exhibition of high and low art, I hoped for something as tonic and brilliant as the great second act of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which the tragic heroine is thrust into the same dramatic space as a band of scruffy buffoons, who seek to distract her from her drawn-out sorrows by snapping their fingers and singing rowdy songs. The first act of Strauss and Hofmansthal's masterpiece was given over to a debate between representatives of *opera seria* and *opera buffa* as to which should take precedence in an evening's entertainment, when Monsieur Jourdain, rich and vulgar, ordains that both operas be put on at the same time, so that the singing will end early enough for a fireworks display afterward. The second act is the result: The classical heroine sings her heavy heart out on the barren island on which her lover, Theseus, has abandoned her, also inhabited, through an impossible artistic collage, by a company of *commedia dell'arte* figures, who undertake to amuse her out of her *Schmerz* and give her some useful pointers on how to handle men. My hope was that the low art in the projected show would do something along those lines—be antic and wry, say not to take matters of art too seriously, that there has to be some basis in fun for the existence of art, that it can't be all sopranic lamentation and tragical sighs and prayers for divine intercession.

In the early years of Pop Art's ascendancy in the New York art world, the situation of Ariadne's improbable island was often enough repeated, with artists of high calling and shamanistic pretensions encountering the new irreverent stars who had challenged the premises of their painting: It was like watching misdialogues between Prince Hamlet and Mickey Mouse. In Victor Bockris's superb life of Andy Warhol, there is an eloquent anecdote about a party given by Larry Rivers in the Hamptons, at which Warhol approached an admittedly drunk Willem De Kooning with an affable "Hi, Bill!" He was rebuffed with the following aria: "You're a killer of art, you're a killer of beauty, and you're even a killer of laughter. I can't bear your work." (As someone who took the scenario of the comic strip seriously, Warhol *had* to have said "Ulp!!!") It was an operatic, or at least a dramatic moment. The Abstract Expressionists perceived themselves as in touch with chthonic forces and the dark metaphysical tides of Being. They believed in magic, mystery and art's high spiritual vocation. And suddenly the art world was invaded by twerps, who painted soup cans and fashioned hamburgers out of plaster-soaked muslin, and who monumentalized Chef Boyardee spaghetti (the pasta revolution had not as yet overtaken the land) or actually made paintings of Donald Duck and Goofy, or the teary faces of vapid girls, those vehicles of teenage love dreams expressing moony sentiments in thought-balloons.

"A painting by Lichtenstein," Max Kozloff wrote in the art pages of *The Nation* (!), "is at once ingenuous and vicious, repulsive and modish—the latest sensation." In another journal he ascribed to these artists "the pin-headed and contemptible style of gum-chewers, bobby-soxers, and, worse, delinquents." This

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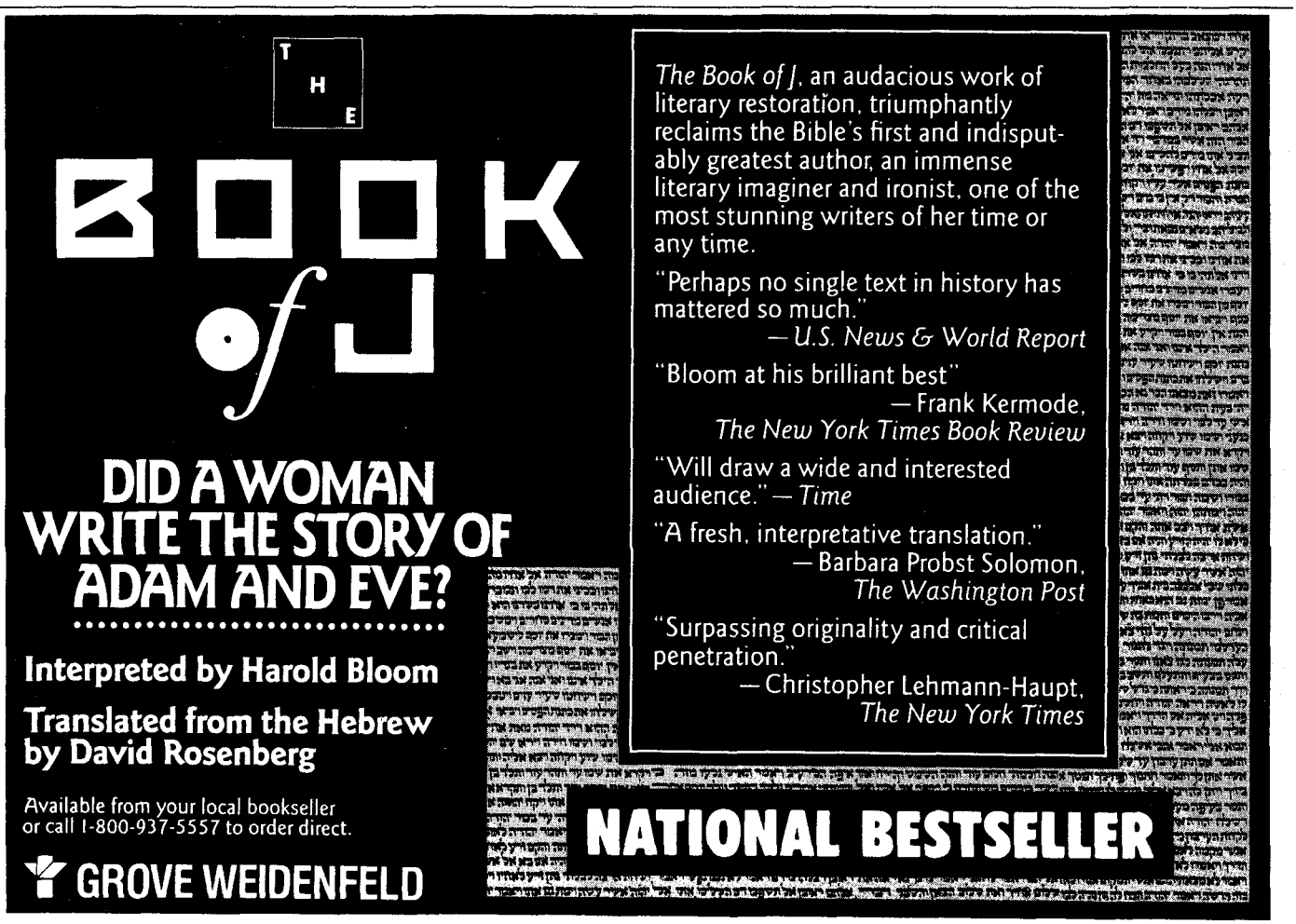
attitude lives on in those whose artistic ethos was formed in Abstract Expressionist times, though it differs greatly from my own. When *The Nation* denounced Pop, *The Journal of Philosophy* declared it philosophically profound; and when, in a review of Warhol's posthumous retrospective at MoMA, I proposed that he was the nearest thing to a philosophical genius the art world had produced, even good friends turned on me. It was essential to their estimate of art and of themselves that Warhol be dumb and *buffa*, while the art that his succeeded was smart and *seria*. And the fact that Pop's images were intinctured with the logos and slogans of commercial semiography contributed to the general suspiciousness with which it was received by high culture, whose priests looked down the very noses that had been popped out of joint.

One of the marvelous expressions of Pop ideology, which affirmed as it subverted the stigma of commercialism, and at the same time sought to paint out the boundary between high and low art, was Claes Oldenburg's *Store*, which operated on East 2nd Street in Manhattan from December 1961 to January 1962. The very idea that art might be purveyed in a store rather than displayed in a gallery, that it might exchange hands across a counter and consist of objects that engaged ordinary men and women in the ordinary moments of life—little monuments of the commonplace, as it were—was in its own way as intoxicating as the aesthetic collisions in *Ariadne*. Here were cheeseburgers with lettuce, slabs of pie, girls' dresses and gym shoes, fashioned out of plaster-stiffened cloth and painted to resemble items in the *Lebenswelt* that no one who lived the everyday culture, to which they belonged, could fail to recognize. They might, to be sure, have some difficulty in recognizing the objects as *art*. But, as if to forestall that problem, Oldenburg dripped paint over their raw surfaces in such a way as to give them a kind of gaiety and an artistic authenticity at once, inasmuch as it was the reigning dogma of that moment that painting was paint-ing: that paint itself, fluid, shiny, puckered, dribbled, dropped and dripping, was the soul and substance of art. It was through the handling of paint that Oldenburg claimed oneness with the heroes of Abstract Expressionism who disdained the subject matter he celebrated joyously. Paint may, indeed must, have given these works their artistic authenticity in the terms of that era; but what Oldenburg was interested in was the language of everydayness. "I am for an art," he wrote, in a manifesto that has since become famous, " . . . that does something other than sit on its ass in the museum. I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero. I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top."

It is, of course, among the ironies of artistic success that coming out on top, for an artwork, means just "sitting on its ass" in some museum or other. It somewhat symbolizes the spirit of the exhibition, "High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture," that its authors, Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, should have made an ingenious and metaphoric salute to Oldenburg's *Store* by appropriating a window, rarely used before in the architecture of MoMA, and treating it *as* a store window in which several of Oldenburg's confections of that era are displayed: "39 Cents (Fragment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of a Sign)," "Auto Tire With Price," "White Gym Shoes" and so on. It is a delicate, elegant gesture of fraternity across the decades, but it is easily subject to the gross critical discourse of our own sour era, which sneers at what it sees as the commodification of art and is already disposed to regard the museum as a kind of store for the elite, in which cultural bric-a-brac carry implicit price tags (to be sure in $$$$$$ rather than in ¢¢¢¢¢¢). And inevitably, inasmuch as the identification of high art with spirituality often coexists in the same critical breast with that attitude, Varnedoe himself has been attacked as a latter-day Monsieur Jourdain, whose philistine disregard of class differences among artworks has forced the tragedians of high art to consort with the ragamuffins and low-lifers of pop culture. "The museum, having abdicated its role as cultural referee by putting what used to be out on the streets inside its sanctuary," ironizes the editorialist of *The Journal of Art*, "sheds the dreary temple/tower image that threatens the triumph of populist tolerance." And Varnedoe—who "claims the sacred mantle of Alfred Barr Jr."—is accused of playing to the galleries in both senses of the term, attempting to please both the pinheaded gum-chewers and the merchants who traffic in art (but clearly not the high-minded editorialist herself).

In truth, the wonderful window, which opens the museum to the street in a complex metaphorical transfer in which the light of art spreads outward as the light of day spreads inward, is a precise expression of what the exhibition is really undertaking to do. Its intention is to relocate, in the historical conditions that gave them nourishment, works of art that have been "sitting on their asses" as eternal aesthetic presences for too long. "We hope to take objects that have too often been isolated as 'timeless' or 'transcendent' and resituate them within the changing, dynamic contradictions of real life," says the catalogue. It is the genius of modern art that it has drawn heavily on vital fragments of popular culture, just as it was the genius of Wittgenstein to find philosophical inspiration in Street and Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*, or the genius of phenomenology, which Sartre was thrilled to learn from Raymond Aron one boozy night in Montparnasse, to make philosophy even out of cocktail glasses. It is in part a *causal* and an *explanatory* thesis that the exhibition advances and sustains, a partial art-historical narrative in which, instead of the influence of genius A on genius B, the story is told of how genius C and genius D found inspiration in scraps of newsprint, theatrical posters and commercial labels, in the sullen scrawls of prisoners and delinquents, or in the lurid imagery of the funnies. "It is quite a feat to subsume Dubuffet and Cy Twombly under the category of graffiti inspired artists," *The Journal of Art* sneers. It is no feat at all if the thesis is one of historical explanation. Nor is it in any sense a reduction of these artists if the explanation in fact is true, for it does not in the least imply that no artistic criterion distinguishes Dubuffet and Twombly from the chalk scribbles and scratchings each may have drawn upon. "High & Low" is in fact a heroic and difficult *exposition à thèse*, but one almost impossible to mount and completely impossible to indemnify against critics unprepared to rethink the categories of modernist works, when construed as cultural artifacts with complex genealogies.

Wittgenstein said, powerfully and beautifully, that "an expression has meaning only in the stream of life." Much the same may be said of art, with suitable qualification of expressions, even if art historians and critics tend to treat works as though they draw their meaning only from the stream of art. Standard historical and critical practice sees works evolving out of other works by formal modification alone, so that the history of art is a string of begats, and works are scions of other works. That is by no means an absolutely wrong way to think of art history, and it is certainly a way of thinking congenial to Varnedoe. But in this show he has undertaken something grandly different, by inserting some of the icons of modernism into the lifestreams that nourished them and to which they owe dimensions of their meaning. The recreated store window—literally a window of opportunity—is one of several built into the 53rd Street facade of MoMA in the renovations of 1984, but it normally is blocked up by sheetrock to increase the sense of blank enclosure and intensify the sensory focus to which the museum's galleries have mainly aspired—chaste cubicles of visual delight. In uncovering the window, Varnedoe is symbolically opening the museum itself up to the stream of life, to the world of commonplace objects from which his displayed objects derived their sustenance and vitality.

There is more than a simple causal thesis of lifestream-to-artwork implied

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in this show; the artwork-to-lifestream influence, though somewhat understressed in the exhibits, was prominent in its intention. The catalogue cites a 1954 text from an in-house publication of Young & Rubicam: "If we were to eliminate, in any one issue of *Life*, all advertisements that bear the influence of Miró, Mondrian, and the Bauhaus, we would cut out a sizable proportion of that issue's linage." And the "modern" look has itself been aspired to by designers for whom MoMA (when it was still referred to as "The Modern") was an immense quarry for forms that became adopted as emblems of modernity: the boomerang-shaped coffee table, the black-and-orange butterfly chair, the kidney-shaped silver brooch, the mobile over the crib. In the ideal life-art-life cycle, "stylistic inventions often propelled the movements of specific manners and strategies from high to low to high to low again: billboards affect avant-garde painters whose work later affects billboard designers . . . or techniques of sales display get picked up in structures of art that in turn change the look of commerce."

The structure of such a cycle is more apparent in some of the five categories of "low" genres with high-art resonances than in others. "Comics" and "Words," for example, work somewhat better than "Caricature" and "Graffiti," and all those rather better than "Advertising," which is in many ways a seriously flawed installation, despite its inspired moments.

Consider, to begin with, "Words." By this the curators have in mind words *as printed*, where the mode of lettering carries meanings beyond those carried by the words themselves. Thus, the characteristic sans-serif style of the newspaper headline conveys a kind of annunciatory or proclamational significance. There are, one might say, "print acts" in definite analogy with what philosophers have termed "speech acts," where the fact that the speaker uses certain words or intonations augments or modifies the meanings of the words themselves were they to be taken merely lexically. The Cubists, for particular example, tore out fragments of banner headlines for insertion into early collages. These allowed the possibility of mischievous puns. Picasso incorporated only "UN COUP DE THE" from a headline which had to have read "UN COUP DE THEATRE." The latter doubtless referred to a political happening of some drama, but the fragment to a shot of tea or even a cup of tea—just the thing for a still life. But it also allows an interpretation in which the dramatic event is a tempest in a teacup. In *Landscape With Posters*, Picasso took the word "KUB"—the brand name of a bouillon cube widely advertised but singularly apt in a (K)ubist composition, since it denotes but fails to exemplify cubicity. The sans-serif style of lettering gets taken up by the Constructivists, who used it brilliantly in posters and for book designs, conveying the urgency of headlines. One such book cover, by Aleksandr Rodchenko, gives graphic excitement to a volume of Mayakovsky's poetry. This 1923 design is appropriated by the curators of this very show for the cover of their catalogue, and its handsome red exclamation point—a high wedge over a low dot—serves as the show's emblem. So lettering migrates from newspaper to painting to design. And the catalogue cover is ambiguous as to whether it is merely graphic art or a high-art statement in the postmodern genre, referring to a style it also appropriates and endorses, to make a sophisticated statement of the theme of the exhibition.

The placement of Picasso and Braque near the threshold of the show has exposed the latter to some severe but, in my view, misguided criticism. The critic of *The New York Times*, uncharacteristically intemperate, writes, "Mr. Varnedoe and Mr. Gopnik review the inception of Cubist collage as if last year's 'Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism' had never happened." To begin with, paintings have different meanings in different streams of life and art, and it is instructive to situate Cubist works in the stream of graphic design and convention. But secondly, not every visitor to the show will view it as a professional critic does, comparing show with show the way sportswriters compare games with games. *Landscape With Posters* has an altogether different weight and reference in Varnedoe's inaugural show than it could have had in William Rubin's valedictory show. The difference that exhibitional context can make when viewing identical works—which carry differing meanings and references in various exhibitions—is one of the things a show like the present one makes clear. And yet, it exacts a heavy price from the viewer, who must identify from the work alone the stream in which it is to have the meaning that Varnedoe and Gopnik mean to evoke (if the show is to be experienced as they intended). But sometimes there is no obvious reason why a work is included, and unless one has recourse to the extremely detailed and

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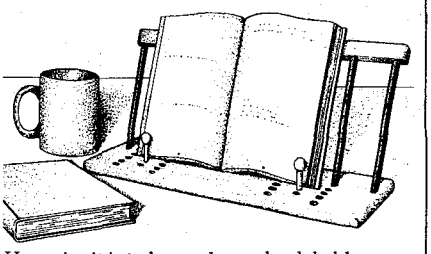

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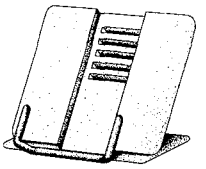

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ambitious catalogue, one will be in the dark. In fact, the catalogue stands to the show in a very different relation from that in which catalogues normally do. These days, catalogues are vast scholarly achievements, even the lifework of historians and specialists. They are indispensable to other specialists (and, in candor, to critics required to review the shows) but generally optional to the average museum visitor, depending upon his or her interest. "High & Low" is a catalogue-driven exhibition, however, to the point that a great many of the exhibits make no sense unless one has read the text (and may still make little sense afterward). In a way, the individual exhibits serve as illustrations for a text. And the text cannot be easily deduced from the illustrations alone.

Take, for egregious example, Duchamp's notorious *Fountain* of 1917, which we all know is a urinal signed "R. Mutt" and dated. Why is it in the "Advertising" section of the show? And why alongside it is Meret Oppenheim's hardly less notorious fur-lined "*coup de thé*"? The *Times*'s critic has every reason to complain that "the visitor might as well be upstairs in the museum's permanent collection galleries." But even when one reads the text that is to justify inclusion of these Dada works, the connections are tenuous: "[Duchamp's] statement also has a curious parallelism with the way the merchandisers of plumbing promoted their wares." And the catalogue shows us as well some vintage photographs of plumbing supply houses with windows full of sinks and tubs and toilets. But who, even if long immersed in the discussions surrounding *Fountain*—philosophical, critical, historical—could conceivably appreciate *this* connection between Duchamp and advertising? And which ordinary visitor could infer that this was the sort of point being made in locating the work in a vitrine in the "Advertising" portion of the show? The principle for including in the same section works by Joseph Cornell is hardly more compelling. The blissful rednecks that *The Journal of Art* fears MoMA's curators are pandering to will hardly be up to the erudition in ephemera that an appreciation of the show exacts as a condition.

The show—and of course the catalogue—concludes with "Contemporary Reflections." This may be read as an effort by Varnedoe as a new director of MoMA to come to terms with the difficult and perhaps intractable art history of the present moment, in connection with which this particular museum has a particular problem of identity. "Modern" must originally have been in part a kind of indexical term, indicating *now* in contrast with *then*. But "modern" also turns out to have been a pretty identifiable style—exactly that style the Young & Rubicam writer must have had in mind in referring to the derived stylistics of the 1950s magazines. If MoMA identifies with that style, its contents and its missions are historically circumscribed. If it adheres to the temporal sense of "modern," these limits are modified, but the work it must deal with is now no longer *modern* in the stylistic sense. It remains open to question whether location in low-high-low cycles is the best way into the art of the present moment. It may be the best entry into the work of Jeff Koons, but hardly, one must feel, with the works actually shown. There ought, instead of stainless steel decanters and displayed vacuum cleaners, to have been his megakitsch frights on which Gopnik has written so instructively elsewhere. Possibly there is a low-high connection for Jenny Holzer, with whom the show closes, inasmuch as she has found inspiration in LED banner billboards for putting her thought up in lights. And, with the help of the catalogue, one can find out why Elizabeth Murray, clearly a favorite of Varnedoe and Gopnik, belongs here. Her work has a kind of cartoon derivation.

One of Murray's works can be seen as a gigantesque pair of shoes with holes in them. These, she claims, derive from the comic strip *Blondie*; and the catalogue concludes with an almost lyrical celebration of big shoes, as a sort of leitmotif of the show. It integrates the big shoes of Mickey, or the trucking character of R. Crumb, perhaps the white gym shoes of Oldenburg, and other works as well. The shoes are emblems of a kind of aesthetic pilgrimage the curators themselves have made, and the walker through the show will have made as well, into the present, so far as it lies across the final threshold of the show. "The deal is that you have to go without a map, and you can only get there on foot." You cannot, however, get through the show itself without a map, and even with one in hand you will at times be lost. Still, it is a remarkable and valuable exhibition, the implications of which for the temple of modern art itself we shall all now watch for with the greatest interest.

"High & Low" remains at MoMA until January 15. It then goes to the Art Institute of Chicago, from February 23 to May 12, and after that to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, from June 23 to September 15. These latter institutions will have to find their own version of MoMA's reclaimed window—or perhaps this sort of point will be less momentous for them to make. □

EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 630*)

is that the conflict is Arab and should be solved by Arabs.

Iraq's aggression against Iran was brutal and uncivilized, as was its use of chemical weapons. But how does that legitimize the way the U.N. has behaved toward Iraq? The Security Council is anything but a democratic body. It is dominated by five big powers, and smaller countries have hardly any say in the resolutions it passes. The Security Council has become nothing but a lynch mob out to get revenge on an Arab ruler who wants to keep the oil wealth for Arabs. Iraq had legitimate grievances against the corrupt British-installed rulers of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti rulers had become lackeys of the West by breaking OPEC ceilings and keeping the price of oil artificially low. In addition, the U.N. and the big powers have failed to solve the brutal Israeli repression of Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza.

Cockburn forgets that the U.N. has refused to condemn the illegal U.S.-imposed embargo of food and medicine. The U.N. also let Asian refugees suffer for many weeks before giving them any consideration, and even today many Asian refugees are still suffering in the camps. Hiding behind international law doesn't diminish the U.N.'s barbaric behavior. In fact, one could argue that the U.N. is hatching up plots of war to impose its will on Iraq. So it is total nonsense to say the left should call for a "genuine" U.N. military involvement and a withdrawal of some U.S. troops. The U.N. has already declared war on Iraq by economic means.

There are many pressing issues in the Middle East that call for forceful action from the U.N., but it has been either unable or unwilling to act, other than by issuing watered-down resolutions. With the Soviet Union now a willing U.S. stooge, the U.N., especially the Security Council, is no longer a legitimate arbiter of conflicts but a cover for imposing the will of imperialist countries. If Cockburn has faith in the U.N. solving, say, the plight of the Palestinians, he is not only blind but also in danger of supporting future imperialist interventions. *Murali Kumbale*

COCKBURN REPLIES

Aptos, Calif.

A lot of the letter writers, unpublished as well as those printed here, give me a tremen-

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dous thrashing for being naïve about the U.N. One *Nation* editor plucked my arm and broke the news that the Security Council was inhabited by imperialist powers! Almost the first political speech I ever gave was one denouncing U.N. complicity in the overthrow of Patrice Lumumba. So the letter writers have a point undisputed by me when they say that at significant times the U.N. has been the cat's-paw of imperial knavery.

All the same, the U.N. Charter is a document of mostly laudable intent, and nations ought to adhere to it. I don't know of anything better on offer and many schemes a good deal worse. It's true that U.N. resolutions on Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza have been flouted because the United States has no interest in having them implemented. That doesn't make them meaningless. Indeed, in its present attempts to use the U.N. the United States is finding these an inconvenience. Would the letter writers mock oppressed peoples around the world as being gullible or naïve when they invoke the U.N. Charter or specific U.N. resolutions or mandates? Would they say that because U.N. sanctions against South Africa may have ultimately benefited multinational capital, the call for such sanctions by the A.N.C. should have gone unheeded? Having for years invoked the Geneva conventions and other international codes with respect to Central America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, are people on the left now to toss such talk aside as misguided?

Michael Ratner presumes to speak for the poor and the South, whose objective circumstances certainly compel realism about the role of the U.N. and of international law. He should ask those poor whether they would prefer a world without the U.N. or a code of international law, however they are traduced. For Nicaragua the World Court did render a politically important judgment, one which even the Chamorro government has thus far refused to renounce, despite enormous U.S. pressure, including blackmail, to do so.

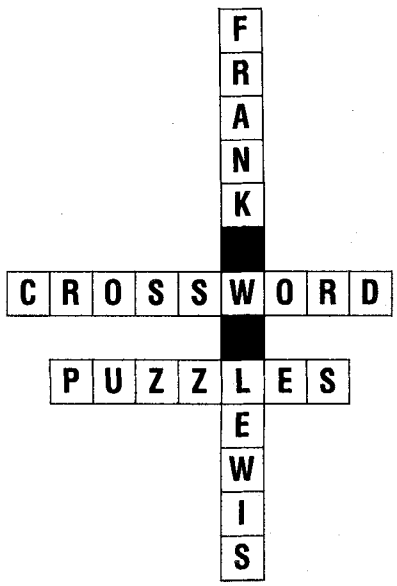
A look at the history of the U.N. and its agencies discloses ripe evidence of U.S. domination, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. So great was U.S. domination that its war in Vietnam was never even discussed. But the history also shows waves of resistance, the growth in weight of the nonaligned, the proffering of new perspectives often discommoding to the United States. In the I.L.O., in Unesco and F.A.O.—to take three examples—there have been waves of dissidence that from time to time proved troubling to the great capitalist power. Ironically these letter writers seem to be as contemptuous of the U.N. and as insistent on U.S. hegemony as the right-wingers, stretching from Pat Buchanan to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who throughout the 1970s and 1980s denounced the U.N. as institutionally hostile to U.S. interests. The right-wingers have been nearer the mark, as a glance at William Safire's columns down the years on the Law of the Sea Treaty will suggest.

There also seems to be a bit of moral absolutism or isolationism at work among those who think it is naïve or namby-pamby to talk about international law or about the proper role of the U.N. In a piece in *The Guardian* for October 24, Michael Ratner and Bill Schaap wrote, "We all know that the application of international law will not be even-handed." We do indeed all know that, just as we know that U.S. laws and police forces in this country are ultimately deployed in defense of capital and property. But such realization has not prevented Ratner, who has given years of his life to the Center for Constitutional Rights, from mustering such law in the interests of the weak and the oppressed. And even Marxists dial 911.

As far as the namby-pamby factor is concerned, the *Workers Vanguard* said airily in one recent issue that from the point of view of the working class it "matters not one whit whether Kuwait . . . is controlled by Saddam Hussein or the filthy rich Kuwaiti merchants or Saudi monarchs." Really? It depends on which workers or classes of workers we're talking about. The Egyptian guest workers who were abused and even murdered in Iraq at Saddam's instigation would probably have had strong views on this matter, as would other guest workers in the gulf region and in Kuwait itself whose lives have been rendered horrible by Saddam's invasion. I notice Murali Kumbale doesn't mention them, any more than Ratner has words for the victims of Saddam's invasion, though he does talk about children dying in Iraq because of the embargo, on what evidence—as of this writing—I do not know.

To be sure, guest workers, particularly women, led exploited lives in Kuwait too. To be sure, Kuwait was no democracy. But there is no equivalency between the regime of Saddam and that of the Emir, and to conflate them evinces an obliquity that has more than a grain of racism in it. Saddam's savage and implacable tyranny is one of the most total in the world today. It strikes me as madness to assert, as Ratner does, that "making criticisms of Iraq part of the progressive community's agenda . . . is outweighed by the mischief and obfuscation that could cause." Every sane person knows Saddam is a monster, so why try to hide the fact?

I don't think Kuwait is a British oil well, as Vogel claims with the lordly First World lilt that sees history and geography only in terms of assets and resources. And though a democratic socialist Kuwait would have been preferable, as such dynasties can go, the Sabah family has not been vile and is certainly more dignified than the Grimaldis. The Sabah crown prince killed on the steps of the Emir's palace the night of the invasion had been a volunteer in 1967, fighting alongside the Palestinians, altogether a more alluring *curriculum vitae* than Saddam's, which three or four years ago shows him presiding with relish over the torturing to death of thou-



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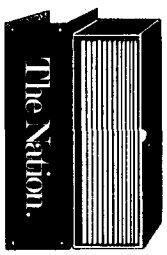

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sands of Iraqi Communists and other political foes. Of course the Sabahs recycled their oil earnings into the banks and stock exchanges of the capitalist countries, as Vogel says with an air of indignation. They also recycled them into an international aid program that had some laudable aspects.

Many letter writers got hot under the collar about my reference to legitimate national boundaries and pointed out with great justice that the boundaries of Kuwait and Iraq had been carved out by imperialist cartographers. Agreed, naturally. Furthermore, it's not just in the Middle East that frontiers have been established on a foundation of fraud or terror or both. But at this point in the twentieth century I don't see much alternative (unless alterations are freely agreed to by all relevant parties) to what we have been handed by history in the way of internationally recognized boundaries. Which status quo *ante* or *post* would they prefer?

Ratner says it would cause "mischief" and "obfuscation" to criticize Iraq and to call for its withdrawal from Kuwait. Why assume that people can have or should have only one idea in their heads at a time, and that if the cerebral synapses are loaded up with "U.S. Out of the Gulf" they would be impossibly burdened if asked to take "Iraq Out of Kuwait" on board as well? Saddam's violation of international law certainly has had something to do with the deployment of U.S. troops to the gulf. Hypocritically invoked or not, such law as breached by Saddam offered Bush a pretext he didn't have before. Once again, Ratner seems to think people can't carry two thoughts (or, by now, four if you count the two just mentioned) in their brains—viz. that Iraq breached an international law and though Bush has grounds on this occasion to point that out, he's a hypocrite nonetheless.

Given Iraq's invasion, U.N. sanctions are legitimate. This doesn't mean future decisions of the Security Council are automatically exempt from criticism or active resistance. Given the fact—disputed at first but certainly indisputable now—that Iraq is not about to invade Saudi Arabia, Bush's deployment of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to the region has no legitimation the left should support. Secretary of State Baker's citation of Article 51 as the basis for a U.S. attack is just as much nonsense now as when it was put forward by Margaret Thatcher. The left can indeed call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and reassignment of any remaining to a genuine U.N. command. As things stand, the U.N. is being used as a U.S. front. A multilateral force and a genuine U.N. command would be something else again. Vogel is utterly wrong to say there's no difference between what the U.N. Security Council has called for and what the United States has done or maybe plans to do. Read the recent remarks of Gorbachev and Mitterrand. Joining Marty Jezer from the other end of the argument, Vogel is confusing a U.S. "multinational" project—deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia under arrangement with the kingdom—with what the U.N. Security Council has called for, which are sanctions and an embargo.

Purely as a matter of political pragmatism I tend to think that stress on the possibility of a negotiated settlement puts more political pressure on the Administration than the stark, unglossed call for U.S. Out of the Gulf, which can be polemically outmaneuvered, as I pointed out, "not so much for what it says as for what it doesn't say" about Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait. I'm not saying every placard has to carry qualifiers and footnotes. Slogans are of necessity brief, but the people crying them should be able to articulate a position. My colleague Rich McKerrow participated in the New York demo on October 20 and does not recall hearing anyone criticize Iraq's invasion in over an hour of speeches. Such a posture strikes me as absurd, and politically dumb.

It's all very well to cry, as Vogel does, "First Grenada, then Panama, now Iraq," as though they are in the same category, but they're not. U.S. rationales in the first two instances were flummery as everyone knew. Indeed, a U.S. triumph on Bush's terms would be disastrous, which is why resistance here is vital. A negotiated settlement brokered by other powers on the Security Council or in the region, followed by a general Mideast conference on other occupations, as called for by a U.N. resolution, would be a reverse for the United States. Absent the countervailing weight of the Soviet Union, mostly now in Bush and Baker's amen corner, the United States is indeed seemingly without challenge as "the capitalist world's chief enforcer," but it's not at all clear to me that this contour of the "emerging world order" will be particularly durable. How long can Germany and Japan be kept off the Security Council? Will their ultimate arrival enhance or diminish this unilateral enforcement power?

Vogel's invocation of anti-imperialism as the basis for "defending Iraq" is rather sad, like an old lion being put through hoops in a circus. Does Kuwait, as victim rather than consensual partner, have no place in his diorama of imperial exploitation? His gibe about my and Senator Sanford's "call for a more long-term geopolitically prudent policy for U.S. imperialism" is mystifying. I certainly think Senator Sanford's call for a drawdown of U.S. forces and transfer of those remaining to a multilateral U.N. command was prudent. If heeded, it would diminish the probability of war. But is the call for a peaceful settlement, plus settlement of other outstanding territorial issues in the region, somehow of long-term benefit to U.S. imperialism? Maybe, maybe not. An alternative, mustering behind Saddam as liberator of the region from imperialist shackles, is as deluded as the hopes of Yitzhak Shamir and others at the start of World War II that the Nazis could be a useful ally in the Zionists' struggle against the British.

Alexander Cockburn

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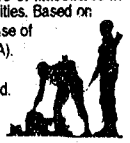

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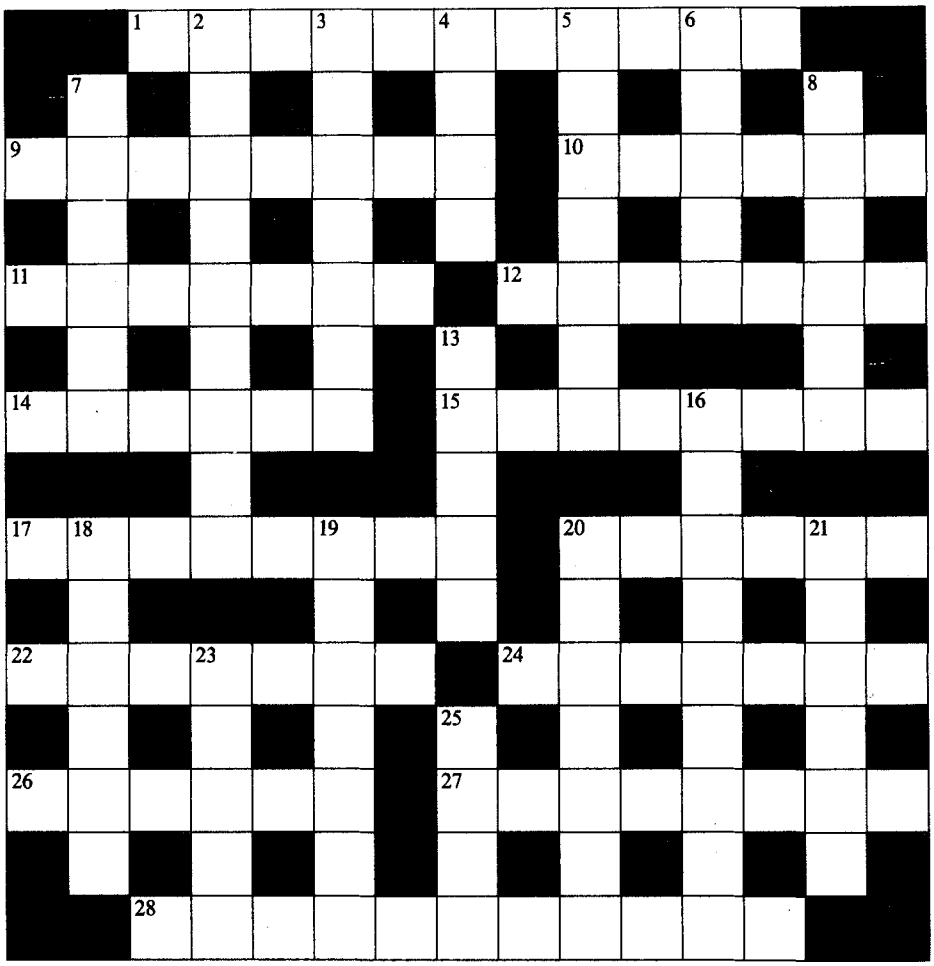
B	R	O	B	D	I	N	G	N	A	G	I	A	N	■
Y	■	R	■	E	■	I	■	E	■	R	■	S	■	B
P	A	C	I	F	I	C	■	T	S	A	R	I	N	A
A	■	H	■	E	■	E	■	T	■	V	■	N	■	C
S	E	A	R	C	H	■	B	L	U	E	F	I	S	H
S	■	R	■	T	■	H	■	E	■	■	■	N	■	■
I	■	D	A	I	S	I	E	S	■	G	R	E	E	D
N	■	■	■	V	■	G	■	O	■	O	■	■	■	E
G	R	O	V	E	■	H	U	M	D	R	U	M	■	P
■	■	P	■	■	■	A	■	E	■	B	■	I	■	O
B	O	A	R	D	I	N	G	■	P	A	S	S	E	S
A	■	L	■	R	■	D	■	L	■	C	■	T	■	I
T	R	I	V	I	A	L	■	I	N	H	E	R	I	T
S	■	N	■	L	■	O	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	O
■	F	E	L	L	O	W	T	R	A	V	E	L	E	R

Crossword Puzzle No. 2313

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Revolutionary, uh, element, uh, Nazis were, with "Heil!"—not pompoms . . . (11)
9 . . . or tassels. (Cures the same kind!) (8)
10 One who fiddles around should, with what the car needs. (4-2)
11 At least partly, the girl is somewhat supple! (7)
12 It may be complex, but nothing gets sort of upside down on paper! (7)
14 Contributed, like, around it, like, amaryllidaceous plants! (6)
15 A real swinging place—but swinging might put it out! (3,5)
17 Something like the mist flower, silver on a mature formation. (8)
20 What might be rounded up with the house pet let loose? (6)
22 One might throw pots and not get much accomplished! (7)
24 What one puts in a garage might be seedy! (7)
26 The answer to the region is "bear," possibly. (6)
27 Just for the record, it's part of the circle where bees hang out! (8)
28 How it is raining speculative securities, as they say! (4,3,4)

DOWN

2 Gives (possibly under duress) these with your head in a holdup? (5,4)
3 The same gin mixture might be hard to understand! (7)
4, 13 and 25 Water color the best in the world might have put in position? (4,9)
5 An article on the insignificant fellow of the big city? (7)
6 Sounding board with this? (5)
7 and 18 Packaging those things proper ladies used to wear, perhaps put on with certain ring ceremonies. (6,6)
8 and 21 Goes after a fall? And they do fall! (6,6)
13 See 4 down
16 Where a swinging bachelor might be is making things old-hat! (9)
18 See 7
19 This needles about good clothes? (7)
20 Trusted one's luck, and ached somehow to be around where Raleigh ended up. (7)
21 See 8
23 Connected to one connected to 15. (The bait, I find, wrong.) (5)
25 See 4

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

PUZZLED?

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